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Sunshine plays and dialogues

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SUNSHINE PLAYS AND DIALOGUES

BY

MARIE IRISH

and OTHERS

THE WILLIS N. BUGBEE CO.

SYRACUSE, N. Y.

Sunshine Plays and Dialogues

By
MARIE IRISH
and others

The Willis N. Bugbee Company
Syracuse, New York

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NOV 25 1947

Sunshine Plays and Dialogues

INCENTIVE

CHARACTERS

MR. SOMERSET, *wealthy business man.*

ADA SOMERSET, *his wife.*

LUCILE, *the society daughter.*

CHESTER, *the lazy son.*

JESTER, *the gloomy butler.*

MRS. MARTIN, *fat and optimistic housekeeper.*

JAMES NORTON, LUCILE'S *indolent, well-to-do suitor.*

SCENE: *The Somerset living room.*

Discovered JESTER, *leaning against back of chair, staring moodily at the floor.*

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

MARTIN (*scornfully*). Ah, ho, ah, hum; so this is the way you're spending your time. Ain't you scart that you'll ruin your health, workin' so hard?

JESTER (*gloomily*). I am workin', ma'am. I'm contemplating.

MARTIN. Ho, now, you needn't to hand me any of your big words. I ain't 'fraid of 'em, not a tall. Con-tem-PLA-tin', indeed!

JESTER (*shaking head mournfully*). Oh, ma'am, have you ever stopped to consider how the young folks of today is afflicted with egotism?

MARTIN (*surprised*). You don't say! Does it strike 'em in the stummick or the liver?

JESTER. In the heads, ma'am, an' it's sure bad for 'em. Now there's the young man of this family we're workin' for. He ain't amountin' to a pound of bird seed an' yet he thinks he knows more'n his father does or ever will.

MARTIN. Oh, I don't know. He's got good taste in clothes. He sure does look nice when he's fixed up.

JESTER. An' who couldn't look nice with his father to foot the bills? There's the daughter, too. Thinks she's the smartest piece of humanity in seven counties an' bosses her folks like she was queen o' Sheeby. I say it's turrible.

MARTIN. Oh, you chunk o' gloom, cheer up an' go to work. They'll turn out all right. You've got to expect young folks to be a little uppity nowdays.

JESTER (*gloomily*). I tell you they're no good. I don't know what the world's coming to. (*Sighs loudly.*)

MARTIN. Cheer up, I say. If my husband wouldn't likely object, I'd go to a show with you tonight so's you could have a good time.

JESTER. Much obliged, but it's all right, seein' I've got a wife to go with me; but I tell you, these young folks nowdays is the limit. (*Exit.*)

MARTIN. Now where is the missus? What with company coming an' no end of things to be done, I'm gettin' that conflustricated I don't know whether black is white or not.

(*Enter* MRS. SOMERSET.)

MRS. SOMERSET. Indeed, Martin, have you nothing to do but stand here as serene as a lily in a flower-bed? You should be busy.

MARTIN. I'm waitin' right here, ma'am, to ask you 'bout this, that, an' the t'other, an' several more things. Now first, I want to know—

MRS. SOMERSET (*waving hands*). Go away. I don't want to hear a *thing*. I don't care what or how you plan, just so you get things done. My mind is worn out from trying to entertain stupid folks at the reception last night. (*Sinks into a chair.*)

MARTIN. But, ma'am, I want to ask if—

MRS. SOMERSET. I don't care which you do. I'm paying you to accomplish things without bothering me, and since time is passing I advise you to get into action. (*Strikes pose of weariness.*)

MARTIN (*briskly*). Yes, ma'am, all right. I've already got things nicely planned; all I wanted was to hear you say you didn't care whether I did them this way or that. Thank you, ma'am. (*Hurries off.*)

MRS. SOMERSET. Now, I'm going to sit here and rest my mind. I'm not going to *think*. I shall not even think about not thinking.

(*Enter* MR. SOMERSET.)

MR. SOMERSET. Now, my dear, don't say a word to bother me. I must get down to the office at once. There's an unusual amount to look after today. I can't be delayed.

MRS. SOMERSET. How glad I am you spoke about not saying anything. It reminded me that I want to talk to you about a new outfit for the trip to the club meeting. I must have some of the *very darlingest* gowns in the city; and as for a coat and hats—

MR. SOMERSET. New clothes? Not —*again*. Why, it was only last month that—

MRS. SOMERSET. Yes, but that was last month. You don't expect me to wear *last month's* gowns at that meeting I hope.

MR. SOMERSET. My dear, I dislike telling you this, but—well, the truth is—things haven't been going any too smoothly with me financially. I am worried.

MRS. SOMERSET (*waving him off*). Oh, go—go! I'm tired. Don't bother me with your troubles. I'll talk to you later. How I dislike men who are financially—worried. Do go. (*He bows coldly and goes.*)

(*Enter* LUCILE.)

LUCILE (*gaily*). Hello, dearest. I hope you're feeling one hundred per cent; of course you are. I can tell by your looks. Where's the captain?

MRS. SOMERSET. Do you mean—the—butler?

LUCILE. I *do* not. I mean the captain of this matrimonial ship—your husband—my father. I've got to see him.

MRS. SOMERSET. I think he has gone to the office. Don't bother me.

LUCILE. But I must see him. I want some money—lots of money, in fact. I want to take a trip on the Mediterranean with a party of the young folks. It's going to be just superbly grand.

MRS. SOMERSET. When did I say you could go?

LUCILE. Oh, dearie, don't be old-fashioned. I said *I* had decided to go. I must have a gorgeous lot of new clothes.

MRS. SOMERSET. The idea of not consulting me. What are mothers for? I don't approve of this trip.

LUCILE. Too late, honey. I've already promised to go. Let me tell you about some of the new clothes I want.

MRS. SOMERSET (*rising*). I certainly can't be bothered—tired as *I* am. Besides, I have my own new clothes to worry over. (*Goes off languidly.*)

LUCILE. Doesn't seem to me that parents are of much use to us, beyond giving us a place to stay and providing the money we need—or at least part of it. I never have as much as I require. (*Slouches in chair.*)

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

MARTIN. Tut, tut, Miss Lucile, is this all you have to do?

LUCILE. What should I be doing?

MARTIN. W'y, now, mending your stockings, or piecing a bed quilt, or—

LUCILE (*laughing heartily*). Piecing a bed quilt! Oh, you funny old dear!

MARTIN. Where is your mother? I thought she was here.

LUCILE. Mother is resting. I suppose she's all worn out trying to decide whether her new gown shall be blue or green.

Just think, Martin (*jumps up and dances about*), I'm going for a Mediterranean voyage. Isn't that fine? I've got to have two thousand dollars for new clothes.

MARTIN. Tut, tut, your poor papa! How can you ask him for so much money?

LUCILE. He should be glad he has me to spend it on, so he won't have to leave it to hospitals, and play-grounds, and libraries. At that, he's none too generous with me. Good-by, Martin. I'm going to the shops. (*Hasty exit.*)

MARTIN. Such a frivolous young lady. What a pity something doesn't happen to bring out the best that's in her.

(*Enter* JESTER.)

JESTER. Indeed, ma'am, have you nothing to do but gaze at the ceiling like a moon-struck flapper? Some folks earn their money easy, I'm telling you.

MARTIN. Jester, wouldn't you like to take a trip on the Mediterranean?

JESTER (*beaming at her*). Sure, but—what would I do with the missus?

MARTIN (*scornfully*). I wasn't thinking of taking you with *me;* I've got a fine-lookin' man of my own. I wonder what it would be like to be young an' sail the Med-i-ter-ranean. (*Sighs.*) I'd like to know. (*Goes off.*)

JESTER (*staring after her*). Now, ain't wimmin funny? What's got into 'er head? Maybe her liver's gone bad.

(*Enter* CHESTER, *gaily*).

CHESTER. A-hoy, there, gay mate. How's the old boat coming? Any chance of getting a good meal this morning?

JESTER (*severely*). Morning is long since past, sir. High noon will soon be here.

CHESTER. And how high is noon going to be—higher than the Woolworth building? Tell me, I pray thee, where is the man who stays here with us? Gone to the office to conquer more thousands, I suppose. I wanted to see him. The truth is, Jester, I've got to have a new car.

JESTER (*horrified*). What? A new car, sir? It is no time since you got your last one.

CHESTER (*sitting lazily*). Three months, if it's a day. If you imagine I'm going to drive an old car like that, you've got another think coming. Say, Jester, what good is dad doing in life beyond supporting his family? He should be thankful I can help him get rid of some of his filthy lucre.

JESTER. Mr. Chester, sir, don't you ever think of work, or something noble?

CHESTER (*laughing*). Noble? I should say not. Let those who are poor and have to work be noble, if they choose. *I* was born to spend money and have a good time. By the way, did dad seem good-natured this morning? I hope so. I ordered that new car and it's going to cost—four thousand.

JESTER (*throwing up hands*). Oh, what your father won't say; I beg you not to tell him today, with company coming. He won't get over it all the evening.

CHESTER. If I were a stupid library he wouldn't mind putting four thousand dollars' worth of books into me. How much better to spend it for something that's alive, like a racing car. So long, Jester. I'm going to tease Martin for something to eat. (*Goes off.*)

JESTER (*disapprovingly*). And to think, he's the heir to his father's wealth. If he and his new car both got smashed up the only real loss would be the car. I'd like to see him where he had to go to work. I wonder what he'd do. (*Exit.*)

(*Enter* LUCILE.)

LUCILE. Madge telephoned that she can't go shopping with me. How tiresome. It isn't time to go out to the club-house for hours, and it's a lot too early for that luncheon date. How am I going to pass the time? It annoys me beyond words to be stranded with nothing to do.

(*Enter butler, followed by* JAMES NORTON.)

JESTER (*bowing*). Mr. James Norton. (*Exit.*)

NORTON (*lazily*). Good morning, fair lady. I trust I find you in good humor and that I am welcome.

LUCILE (*coldly*). You're as welcome as a cyclone in July. I thought I said you didn't need to come here again. (*They sit.*)

NORTON. But, dear lady, that was yesterday. I felt sure you had changed your mind by today. How fair to see and charming to behold you are. In truth, methinks you have grown more beautiful overnight.

LUCILE. Oh, stop that foolishness. If you can talk, don't chatter like a monkey.

NORTON (*pleasantly*). Now, sweet maid, why should you throw my early ancestors up to me? I'm not to blame for Darwin's discoveries.

LUCILE. Is there anything you want? I'm *very* busy this morning.

NORTON. I came over to ask you to marry me. Somehow I just can't believe that you don't realize that I'm the one and *only one* to make you happy. Think how handsome we'd look at the altar.

LUCILE (*crossly*). Oh, go home. This is eight times you've asked me to waste myself on you. I'm tired of it. I'm going with the Barlows on a Mediterranean trip, so I won't have to see you again for ages.

NORTON. Good, I'm going with them, too. They won't take no for an answer. We'll have a wonderful time. We'll never get bored. If there's nothing else to do I can propose and you can refuse me.

LUCILE. I may as well die before we start for that will bore me to death.

(*Enter* MR. SOMERSET, *much agitated.*)

MR. SOMERSET. Lucile, where is your mother? (*Sits.*) Find her and ask her to come here, please. (*Nods to Norton, then gets up and paces floor.*)

LUCILE. Can't one of the servants find her? I have company.

MR. SOMERSET. Do as I requested.

NORTON. Really, I must be going. Good-by. (*Goes off one side, Lucile the other.*)

Somerset (*sitting*). How can I tell them? I can imagine how they'll stand by me. A nice family I have—fitted for one thing, spending money. What am I going to do? (*Groans, head on hand.*)

(*Enter* MRS. SOMERSET.)

MRS. SOMERSET. Dear me, if you're sick why didn't you go to the hospital instead of coming home? You know I'm no nurse.

MR. SOMERSET. I have something to tell you; something vitally important.

MRS. SOMERSET. Oh, *must* I listen? I'm busy trying to rest. You don't realize how tired I get.

(*Enter Lucile.*)

LUCILE. I want to tell you, father, that I don't thank you for coming in and ordering me about and sending my company home. I—

MR. SOMERSET. Both of you sit down and *keep still.* I have something to say. (*They sit, both acting offended.*)

(*Enter* CHESTER, *sauntering on in bored manner.*)

CHESTER (*gaily*). Good morning, dear family.

MR. SOMERSET (*scornfully*). Morning, indeed! Did you ever see the morning of a day?

CHESTER (*sitting*). Oh, yes, I got up early once to go fishing. What are you folks planning—a picnic?

MR. SOMERSET. Anything but a picnic. I want to tell you that—

LUCILE (*interrupting*). Oh, but I'm going on a long, long picnic; a trip on the Mediterranean. I need oceans of new clothes, daddy.

MR. SOMERSET (*desperately*). If you will all listen, I want to tell you that—(*groans*)—that—the truth is, I'm—I've—gone to—the wall.

CHESTER (*airily*). Well, climb over the wall. Maybe the other side will be better pickings.

MRS. SOMERSET (*angrily*). Do you mean it's—more money—troubles? I'm tired of them.

(*Enter* JESTER *with a telegram.*)

JESTER. A telegram for you, Mr. Somerset. They just sent it up from the office. (*Bows and retires.*)

MR. SOMERSET (*opening and reading telegram*). Let us hope it is not bad news. (*Groans; gets up and starts pacing floor.*)

LUCILE. Is this a movie? I don't enjoy the dramatics myself.

MR. SOMERSET (*with effort*). My affairs have been much disturbed financially for some weeks. This morning I received word that my mining venture in Alaska has—failed; this telegram, from my brother, says our oil investment in Oklahoma is a dead loss. I'm—ruined! (*Sits.*)

MRS. SOMERSET (*jumping up*). I won't be ruined. Oh, this is terrible! (*Hurries off, wiping eyes.*)

LUCILE (*jumping up and patting father's shoulder*). Don't you worry, daddy. I'll help you. I'd be a whiz at commercial work. I'll be a stenog and earn my own living. I don't mind.

CHESTER (*patting other shoulder*). Sure, I'll help too. I believe I'd like to work. Uncle Abner will give me a job and I'll give you half I make. Oh, that reminds me. (*Hurries off.*)

MR. SOMERSET. This is splendid. It's worth failing if you two will brace up and amount to something in life. I'm sorry for your mother; we'll have to let the servants go.

LUCILE. Well, let them go. I'll learn to cook. I'm sure I'd like it.

MR. SOMERSET (*rising*). You've given me new courage. I'll go back to the office and see what I can do. (*Hurries off.*)

LUCILE. Poor daddy. This is hard for him and I'm going to stand by him. It's no worse for me to work than thousands of other young women.

(*Enter* CHESTER, *briskly.*)

CHESTER. Well, I called them up and said I couldn't take that new car. Lucky I hadn't paid anything on it. To tell you the truth, I believe I'm tired of spending money and loafing. I'll enjoy some honest labor. I'm going to see Uncle about a job. (*Hurries off.*)

(*Enter* MARTIN.)

LUCILE. Martin, I want to learn to make a lemon pie. I want to make one today.

MARTIN (*astonished*). W'y, child, what ails you? What has happened?

LUCILE. We've lost all our money; we're ruined. Poor papa—we're going to help him all we can. Chester is going to get a job and I'm going to be a stenographer, and learn to cook, too, for we can't afford to keep you and Jester any longer.

MARTIN. Tut, tut, Miss, I'd like to see you turn me off. (*Wipes eyes.*) I'll stay here and help without any pay till things get better. I'll teach you to make pies and lovely frosted cakes. Your poor papa!

LUCILE. I'm going down town right away to see about entering that commercial school. My pearls will pay for the course. (*Goes off.*)

(*Enter* JESTER.)

JESTER (*as Martin wipes her eyes*). Are you weeping for a trip on the MediTE-ranyan, ma'am?

MARTIN. Oh, Jester, it's awful—Mr. Somerset has lost all his money. The children are both going to work. I said they would brace up some day, the darlings.

JESTER. Mr. Somerset—ruined? It can't be. And that boy and girl going to work? That's more surprising still. Indeed it is.

MARTIN. It IS not. It's just what I expected. (*Goes off, head in air.*)

JESTER (*shaking head*). Ah, this money; it's terrible unreliable. Today it is and tomorrow it isn't, like the grass of the field. (*Exit.*)

(*Enter* LUCILE, *dressed for the street.*)

LUCILE. I'm going to the commercial college. I shall fit myself for a private secretary. I just know I'll make a good one. I'll show folks what I can do when I have to.

(*Enter* JESTER, *followed by* JAMES NORTON.)

JESTER (*bowing*). Mr. James Norton. (*Withdraws.*)

LUCILE. Now, Jimmie, I can't waste a bit of time on you. I'm in a hurry to get down town. It's *very* important.

NORTON. I met Chester on the street and he told me the bad news. It's sure hard lines, dearest. I hurried right over to tell you that if you'll marry me I'll—

LUCILE. The idea of proposing to me at a time like this. You have no sense of propriety. Go home; I'm in a hurry.

NORTON. You are not going to work. I'm going to take care of you.

LUCILE. You *are* not. I *want* to work and help daddy. I shall enjoy it, and it's the best thing in the world for Chester. It will make a man of him.

NORTON. Then *I* shall go to work, too. Father offered me a good chance just the other day. I'll show you that *I* can do something as well as you and Chester.

LUCILE. Oh, fine, Jimmie. I believe I'd like you a whole lot if you would amount to something worth while. If you had ten thousand dollars in the bank that you had earned yourself, I—I'd—

NORTON. Yes, what, darling?

LUCILE. I believe, after I've earned some money, and learned to make lemon pie and frosted cake, I'd—marry you.

NORTON (*eagerly*). Oh, will you, really, really and truly, dearest?

LUCILE. I think so; it depends on how long it takes you to earn that ten thousand dollars. You needn't hurry too fast, though, for I want to help daddy. I can work when I have a good incentive.

NORTON. I'll save the ten thousand all right. You'll see what I can do when I have a good incentive. Fine things, aren't they, these incentives? (*Takes her hands and beams upon her.*) I'll show the world what I can do when I have an incentive like *you.*

LUCILE (*smiling at him*). I believe I *do* like you, Jimmie, but come; I've got to hurry. (*They go off hand in hand.*)

CURTAIN.

AW, GEE!

CHARACTERS

MR. *and* MRS. GIBBONS; *son* WILL, *a high school pupil, and* GRACE COOK, *a classmate.*

SCENE: *The* GIBBONS *living-room.* MR. GIBBONS *sits reading, his wife busy with fancy-work,* WILL *slouched down in an easy chair.*

MRS. G. (*coaxingly*). Willie, dumpling, I *do* wish you wouldn't slouch in your chair in that uncouth manner. Really, it doesn't look a bit aristocratic, dumpling.

WILL (*crossly*). Aw, gee, I wish you'd quit calling me dumpling. It makes me sick—fairly sick. Can't you keep in mind the fact that I'm grown up? (*Sits up in chair.*)

MRS. G. (*complacently*). Why, I called your papa dumpling for years after we were married.

WILL (*disgustedly*). Aw, gee, no wonder he's got the dyspepsia. I should think he'd have it a lot worse. Dumpling! Aw, gee! Say, dad, may I take the car this evening to transport some of our class over to Lakewood to a party?

MR. G. (*severely*). You're taking that car out too much. I don't approve of you having it out at night and you know it. Something will happen; it's a wonder you haven't had an accident before this.

MRS. G. I worry ever so much when you're off with the car. You're assuming too much responsibility—isn't he, papa?

WILL (*indignantly*). Aw, gee, why do you have to act as if I'm a ten-year-old? All the fellows drive around in their fathers' cars. I could drive a taxi if I didn't have to go to school. You can't realize that I'm grown up.

MR. G. (*scoffingly*). Grown up? I s'pose you're most thirty. Be getting married some of these days, eh?

WILL. You know I can't stand girls. I wouldn't fall for the best-looking one in town, not even if her father had a gold mine and an oil well. I don't believe in matrimony.

MR. G. Look here, you needn't speak in that disrespectful way about marriage. It doesn't sound well.

MRS. G. I should say not. Why, your father and I both got married.

WILL. Aw, gee, and see what it's done for dad. If he hadn't got married he might have gone to South Africa and made a fortune in the diamond mines, or been a big sheep man in Australia, or explored the wilds of Thibet and written a book about it.

MR. G. What you think I'd want to waste my time that way for? Where do you get all these silly ideas?

MRS. G. I hope he'll find a nice, sweet girl some of these days. I think it would be real sweet if you'd fall in love with one of the girls in your class.

WILL (*jumping up*). Aw, gee! I wouldn't get married on a bet—not even on a dare. Girls are impossible, I tell you. Well, I've got to get started for that party. Is there plenty of gas in the car?

MR. G. I'll have to look 'er over a little. There's been something wrong ever since you had 'er out the last time. (*Rises.*) I don't see why you can't be more careful.

WILL. Aw, gee, lay it to me 'cause the car wears out. They all wear out—it's the nature of 'em. (*Mr. G. goes off.*) I can't help it 'cause rough roads shake a car up a lot.

MRS. G. Now, Willie, I hope you'll not be out late. It's not good for you to be losing a lot of sleep.

WILL. Aw, gee, don't start on that! You know I always get home before morning. I hope dad hurries. I've got to go. (*Throws himself in chair.*)

MRS. G. I'll go tell papa to hurry. I don't think there's really anything the matter with the car, but he likes to fuss with it. Did you get a clean handkerchief, dumpling?

WILL (*angrily*). Dumpling! Aw, gee, you're enough to drive a fellow from home. I'm going to Alaska and get a job.

MRS. G. You may borrow a little of my perfume if you want to. I've just got a new bottle. (*Goes off.*)

WILL. I'm a half-hour late now. If this isn't the stove-poker's pajamas. (*Slouches moodily in chair.*)

(*Enter* MRS. GIBBONS *followed by* GRACE COOK.)

MRS. G. Here's Grace. I'll let you entertain her while I go out to see how the car is coming. (*Exit.*)

WILL (*jumping up*). Aw, gee, Grace, I'm glad you came over. This is fine of you to go to all that bother when it's such a lot of trouble to put yourself out this way and all.

GRACE. Oh, it's no trouble, and you know I like to be bothered. I wasn't sure whether you were going to take the car. (*They sit.*) I thought I'd find out, so I'd know whether to go over to Ethel's.

WILL. Yes, I'm taking our car, but as usual, dad has to look it over for half a day before I start. Aw, gee, he makes me tired.

GRACE. Aren't parents the limit? If I wasn't sort of fond of mine I'd trade 'em off and get a new pair. Of course, I try to be patient with them. (*Sighs.*) Say, boy, you sure look swell tonight. You have kind of a distinguished air—if you know what I mean.

WILL. Aw, gee, I'm nothing for looks. You're the one that's got the beauty. You're the classiest-looking girl in the school—if you know what I mean.

GRACE. Who—ME? Say, that's sure sweet in you to say so.

WILL (*earnestly*). Aw, gee, honest, sometimes I can't study in school for thinking 'bout how pretty you are—like a rose in June, if you know what I mean.

GRACE (*sweetly*). W'y, dumpling, it's sure nice in you to say so. I appreciate it, and I don't mean maybe.

WILL (*more earnestly*). You don't know how I like to have you call me dumpling. It just thrills me to the very heart. You don't know how it makes me feel—as if I could walk on the top of the world.

GRACE. I thought maybe you'd think it was silly.

WILL (*rising*). Silly? Aw, gee, I should say NOT! You couldn't be silly—even if you were—if you know what I mean. (*Stands by her chair gazing at her adoringly.*) W'y, Grace, I'm going to marry you some day if you'll have me.

GRACE. But you mustn't let me interfere with your life work. You must become a noted man. I know you can. (*She rises and faces him.*)

WILL (*taking her hands*). Aw, gee, what's fame to having a girl like you? W'y, I—I—I'd give up a trip to the North Pole for you. Do you s'pose you could like me a little?

GRACE. Sure, dumpling. I told the girls the other day you are the only boy I care about.

WILL (*rapturously*). Aw, gee! (*He starts to embrace her.*)

(*Enter* MR. GIBBONS.)

MR. G. Well, the car's ready. Must be time you're getting started.

GRACE (*as they move apart*). Yes, we've got to beat it. We mustn't be late.

MR. G. Now, don't you two get to spoonin'. You're altogether too young to think of anything like that.

WILL (*guiltily*). Aw—gee! (*He and* GRACE *hurry off.*)

CURTAIN.

JUST BEFORE MIDNIGHT

CHARACTERS

NED CANBY, *a discouraged young man*

IONE LARELLE, *an actress*

MRS. LIBBY, *the landlady*

ZIP, *a hold-up man*

SCENE: *A scantily furnished room with table and a couple of chairs.*

Discovered, NED CANBY, *sitting at table, head on hand.*

CANBY (*bitterly*). This is the—end. I can go no farther. I have tried; I've worked and struggled, but ill-health and bad luck have been too much for me. Life is unfair—some have too much, others have nothing. There is no way left for me to turn; no ray of hope, no matter which way I look. (*Bows head in both hands, elbows on table.*) There's a way out of life; I shall take it tonight. The poison I have will work quickly. (*A knock at the door.*)

(*Enter* MRS. LIBBY.)

MRS. LIBBY. I've been waiting up for you, Mr. Canby. I thought I never *would* hear you come in. Some folks stay out too late for their own good, *I'll* say. (*Strikes a menacing attitude.*) I've come to get your rent. I've spoken to you about it twice. I'd like to know what you mean, gettin' way behind like this. You know my rules, young man. (*Shakes finger at him.*) Now, you hand over that rent or—out you go tomorrow, and I'll hold your belongings, sir. I'll show you who's running this house.

CANBY (*rising with discouraged air*). You'll have to wait until tomorrow, Mrs. Libby. I'm sorry, but—

MRS. LIBBY (*interrupting*). Your bein' sorry don't buy my coal, or put meat on my table, or provide me a new pair o' shoes that I've been needin' for most a month. No, sir! (*Shakes finger.*)

CANBY. I didn't mean to get behind, Mrs. Libby, but I've been unfortunate.

MRS. LIBBY (*mockingly*). Oh, unfortunate, unfortunate! I've heard that cry before. That doesn't help me out. Your bein' unfortunate won't pay my bills. It's young men like you that makes us landladies git gray-haired long 'fore our time. Now (*ugly manner*) I want that rent money.

CANBY. You certainly shall have it. If you'll just wait until tomorrow everything will turn out all right.

MRS. LIBBY (*shaking finger*). But not an hour, not a *minute,* after tomorrow. Mark—my—words; I'm on your trail, sir. (*Exit.*)

CANBY (*as she goes*). Thank you, Mrs. Libby. (*After she leaves.*) She'll get her money all right. My insurance will fix everything up. I'll write a note now to my sister, asking her to wire the money since she's to get my insurance. (*Sits at table, takes paper and pencil and writes.*) There's no one who will feel bad to have me gone. I've made a mess of life—I may as well pass out and be at rest. (*Writes.*) This is a cowardly thing to do but—well, I have no fight left. (*Writes.*)

Enter ZIP *with black mask over eyes, hat pulled down, collar up, and an imitation gun in his hand.*)

ZIP (*moving up quietly, standing by* CANBY *with gun pointed.*) Stick 'em up, mister, an' be spry about it.

CANBY (*looking up from writing with a start*). Well, I'll —be—blessed!

ZIP (*ugly manner*). Not blessed but—shot. Put 'em up, I say.

CANBY (*quietly*). Well, brother, I was going to kill myself in about ten minutes. I think you better shoot and save me the trouble.

ZIP (*gun still pointed*). What yu killin' yerself fer?

CANBY. Down on my luck. Can't make a go of it.

ZIP. Say, ain't you the guy in this place that's got a thousand-dollar diamond pin? That's what I'm after.

CANBY. Man, if I had a thousand-dollar diamond I wouldn't be here with the landlady kicking me out because I can't pay my room rent.

ZIP (*with gun still on* CANBY). Aw, yer foolin' me. Fork over that pin an' (*ugly*) do it quick.

CANBY (*handing him the letter*). This is what I've just written. It may convince you that I wouldn't have been alive an hour from now.

ZIP (*reading*). Aw, heck, w'y, say, don't sniff out this way. (*Lowers gun and sits.*) They mus' be some way yer can manage to stick on. Wot's de matter, anyhow?

CANBY. Hard luck, sickness, lost my job, a friend I trusted lit out with cash I loaned him; altogether it's too much for me.

ZIP. Aw, buck up. Say, I been doin' perty good lately—you jes' take this an' start over. (*Pulls some bills from pocket and lays several on the table.*)

CANBY. Thanks, brother, but I can't take these. I might never pay them back.

ZIP. Who's askin' yer to? Fergit I let yer have 'em. My heart hain't all black, an' I hain't de feller to pass up a bozo wot's in trouble. S'long. (*Slips out quietly and quickly.*)

CANBY. A rogue with a noble spirit; a yegg with a heart of gold. My friends—or those who were supposed to be friends, would let me go under without raising a finger, but this gunman has saved me. (*Bows head, overcome.*) I'm going to start again. (*Counts money.*) Seventy dollars! I can make things come my way now, I'm sure. How glad I am that I'm still here and have another chance. (*There is a soft knock; he goes over and admits caller.*)

(*Enter* IONE LARELLE *with letter.*)

IONE. I didn't know whether you would still be up, Mr. Canby, for it is almost midnight. I just came home from the show and found this letter for you that had been left by mistake with a bunch of my mail. When I saw the light under your door, I decided to bring it in to you. It may not be important, and then again, it may. (*Lays the letter on table.*)

CANBY. No, I imagine it's not important, but it was kind in you to bring the letter to me. Won't you sit down, Miss Larelle?

IONE. Thank you, no. I'm dead tired and must get to sleep. These struggling actresses, like myself, who haven't won either a name or fame, don't have an easy time, you know, Mr. Canby. Hard work and a lot of worry seems to be our lot.

CANBY. You always look so happy, I supposed you were doing famously.

IONE. Why go about with a long face. That doesn't help any and life isn't half bad. There's usually *some* way to win out, don't you think?

CANBY. An hour ago I would have said there were times when one couldn't go on, but now—I'm ready to agree with you that there usually *is* a way to carry on in spite of obstacles.

IONE (*laughingly*). You must have had a change of heart. Did something nice happen?

CANBY. Something very nice, indeed, Miss Larelle. Perhaps I'll tell you about it some day.

IONE. All right, but not tonight. I must go. We folks who aren't any too handsome must look out for our beauty sleep. Goodnight. (*Exit.*)

CANBY. A brave young woman. I don't believe she would consider suicide. What a coward I was. I wonder what this letter is. (*Picks up envelope and looks at it.*) I'll declare, it's from Uncle Ferdinand. Whatever is he writing to me about? I supposed he had forgotten I existed. (*Stands by table and opens letter.*) May as well see what it's all about

(*Reads.*) What's—this? Of all the remarkable—surprises! This—this is simply—amazing. (*Sits.*) Who'd have dreamed it of Uncle Ferdinand? Can I believe my eyes? (*Stares at letter, then reads aloud*):

> Dear Nephew: It has come to me in a round-about way that you have been sick and having more than your share of hard luck. It made me think of a time in my younger days when things all seemed to go against me and I was so discouraged I wanted to stop living. So, since I'm getting old and don't need all I have laid by, I'm sending you a little check that may come in handy. (*Stops reading and looks at check.*)

One hundred dollars! The good, kind old fellow. (*Bows head in thankfulness.*) I don't deserve this. (*Rises and crosses room.*) What if—what *if* I had taken that fatal dose? The zero hour came and I didn't have courage to face it, but life was kind to me. I shall try to do better (*with much feeling*). I shall try to atone. (*Gazes happily at check as curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN.

CHARLES THE CONQUEROR

CHARACTERS

JOSEPH GREEN
MARY GREEN, *his wife*
NORMA, *their charming daughter*
AUNT SUSAN, *an old maid*
GRANDPA GREEN, *elderly but spry*
JANE, *the young maid, nice looking*
CHARLES DEAN, *a sheik*
FRANK EVANS, *quiet and shy*

SCENE: *The well-appointed living-room of the Greens. Discovered,* MR. *and* MRS. GREEN.

MRS. GREEN. I am not certain, Joseph, that I approve of Frank Evans' attentions to Norma. He's a nice boy, but—

GREEN (*interrupting*). I suppose he doesn't register with you because he doesn't talk all the while, and act like a one-clown circus whenever he's in company. You women are all alike. A fellow has to be always chattering to get by with you.

MRS. GREEN (*crossly*). You know yourself that Frank is too shy. He'll never amount to a lot. Norma can do better.

GREEN. Who wants her to do better? You didn't do any too well yourself when you married.

MRS. GREEN (*sweetly*). Oh, I don't know. You're not a Henry Ford, or a Rockefeller, or an inventor like Edison, nor a wizard like Burbank, but—well, you're not such a poor catch.

GREEN (*pleased*). That's nice in you, Mary. You've got lots of sense—for a woman.

(*Enter* FRANK EVANS.)

FRANK (*quietly*). Good evening, folks. Jane told me to come right in. I hope you don't mind.

(MRS. G. *speaks coldly.*)

GREEN (*cordially*). How are you, Frank? Glad to see you. Have a seat. How's everything coming?

FRANK (*sitting*). Quite well, I think. I'm getting used to my new work in the office rather slowly, but I think I'll manage all right. Is—is Miss Norma home?

MRS. GREEN. No, she isn't. She's off for the evening, and you know how these girls stay out when they're having a good time. No telling when Norma will be home.

FRANK (*rising*). Then I'll be going. I—I'm—I'll—go along.

GREEN. Better stay and visit awhile. No need to hurry.

FRANK. Really—I—I—think I must go. Goodnight. (*Exit.*)

MRS. GREEN. Humph. If he isn't a stick. I'm glad Norma is gone.

GREEN. He isn't much for fuss and feathers, I'll admit, but he's a good, reliable fellow.
(*Knock is heard, off stage.* MRS. G. *goes off and returns.*)

(*Enter* MRS. G., *followed by* CHARLES DEAN.)

MRS. GREEN (*as they enter*). We're glad to see you, I'm sure. This is Mr. Green.

DEAN (*shaking hands effusively*). Glad to meet you, Mr. Green. It's a real joy to meet a man I've heard so many fine things about. I have a letter to you from Judge Whipple. (*Gives* MR. G. *letter.*) He wanted me to be sure to look you up. I assure you, Mrs. Green, he didn't stretch it when he said you were a charming woman. He knows a real gem when he sees her, I'll say.

MRS. GREEN (*very pleased*). Thank you, Mr. Dean. Have this chair. We're more than glad you called. (*All sit.*)

DEAN. Thank you. And your delightful daughter—is she at home? The Judge said I'd find her very interesting. From what I've heard I'm sure she has most of these movie actresses outclassed a mile for wit and beauty. I'm simply languishing to meet her.

MRS. GREEN (*aside*). Isn't he wonderful? (*To* DEAN.) I'm SO sorry daughter isn't home, but she'll be here soon. She was coming back in a few minutes and I'll telephone her to hurry. Just excuse me. (*Exit.*)

DEAN. Certainly glad to meet you so soon after coming to town, Mr. Green. It is a satisfaction to me to know the real substantial men. Let me meet some of the representative men, I say, and I can tell what their town is like. Yes, sir, I enjoy these pro-bono-publico men. I surely do, Mr. Green. I hope you'll let me come to see you folks once in awhile.

GREEN (*warmly*). Delighted to have you, Mr. Dean. (*Aside.*) What a pity Frank Evans isn't more like him.

(*Enter* AUNT SUSAN.)

SUSAN (*as she enters*). Is Mary here? Oh. pardon me, brother, I didn't know you had a caller. (*Looks at* DEAN *coyly.*)

GREEN. This is Mr. Dean, Susan. My sister, Miss Green, Mr. Dean.

DEAN (*jumping up and shaking hands*). Charmed to know you, I'm sure. I always like to meet these young ladies. Take this seat. (*They sit.*) I may as well confess right now, I enjoy sitting down and talking with intelligent-looking ladies—no slight intended to Mr. Green, of course. You have fine taste in clothes; pardon me for mentioning it, Miss Green, but your gown is *just the color* of your lovely eyes.

SUSAN (*gushingly*). How splendid in you to notice it. Most men are so blind. I didn't pick out the color of my eyes, you know, but I *can* select dresses that go well with them. That's important for a *young* woman—there's so much in color, you know.

DEAN. Ah, yes, dear Miss Green. The name of a rose isn't important; it would be just as lovely if we called it a cabbage, but ah, the color!

GREEN (*rising*). Just excuse me, Mr. Dean. I'll see if my wife got Norma on the telephone. (*Comes up, speaks aside.*) Norma must come home. He mustn't waste his charms on old Susan. (*Exit.*)

SUSAN. Oh, you *must* meet dear Norma. She's charming, if I *do* say it. I think she's lots and lots like me. (*Simpers.*)

DEAN (*ardently*). Then I can't meet her quick enough. And you and I are going to be great friends, I know that, Miss Green.

SUSAN. Oh, are you interested in crochet? I have some lovely things—that I've done. I know you'd like them.

DEAN. Boy, yes! I love 'em. I'm a real fiend for 'em.

SUSAN (*rising eagerly*). I'm going to show you some I've made. (*Exit.*)

DEAN. Great salt mackerel—what's crochet? I can't remember. Is it a kind of cookie, or what? I hope I like 'em. (*Rises.*) I'm sure getting along fine. I'll be in solid with the family in no time at all. Whipple said the one who got this daughter would fall into money—Green has barrels of

it. Little Charles here (*hits himself on chest*) wouldn't cry a bit at having all that goes with the girl. I'll soon be sitting pretty. (*Struts across room, then sits.*)

(*Enter* GRANDPA.)

GRANDPA. Well, sir, how do you do, sir? I believe you're a stranger in this house but you're welcome just the same, sir. (*Shakes hands.*)

DEAN. Very glad to know you. Are you a—a progenitor of Mr. Green?

GRANDPA. W'y, no, no, not a pro—jenny-what-ever-it-was. I'm his father an' a Methodist. Nice day, sir. (*They sit.*)

DEAN. So you're Mr. Green's father. Fine. I understand now why Mr. Green is such an admirable man—he takes after you. Very glad I met you for I do enjoy elderly men.

GRANDPA. Say, do you like to hear stories? I've got 'bout a hundred I can tell you--yarns 'bout bears an' Injuns an' such. You ought to hear 'bout when I most got chewed up by a bear an' was most scalped by an Injun. Make your hair stand right up on end, sir.

DEAN. Fine! I'll come over some time just to hear them.

GRANDPA (*rising*). I'm going to get a picture of me taken with a trout I caught and show you. Whoppin' big trout—most three feet long—well, maybe not quite, but it was sure a whale. I'll get the picture.

DEAN. Yes, do. I've just got to see it. We'll have some grand times together, I can see that.

GRANDPA (*coming up and speaking aside*). Now he's *some* fellow. Why don't Norma set her cap for him? Frank Evans isn't anywhere beside this young man, no, sir! (*Exit.*)

(*Enter* JANE, *showy dress, ready to go out for the evening.*)

JANE (*coming on quickly*). I—oh, I beg your pardon. I thought—

DEAN (*jumping up, outstretched hand*). Ah, at last, at *last* I have the joy of meeting you. What a delightful pleasure. (*Takes her hand and bows over it.*)

JANE (*aside*). Prunes an' pickles! Who's this? (*Makes eyes at him.*) I'm glad to know you—that is, I would be if I knew who you are.

DEAN. I am Charles Dean, introduced to the family by an old friend. Mr. and Mrs. Green are anxious for me to meet you, and as for me I'm simply enchanted. Do be seated. (*They sit, near each other.*)

JANE. It's all right if the folks said so. It doesn't pain me a bit to get acquainted with you. Really, I dote on good-looking young men.

DEAN (*pretending grief*). I—shall have to go.

JANE. What, so soon?

DEAN. You don't want me; you like *good-looking* men.

JANE (*teasingly*). I've seen better-looking ones than you but you're *rather* handsome, so please stay.

DEAN. Oh, I shall. The joy of basking in the radiance of your glorious orbs. Why are you not on the stage? Your beauty would bring thousands to your feet. Pardon me for talking in this manner but you have bewitched me. Be kind to me; tell me we are going to be friends.

JANE. Of course we are, Beauty Boy. You are just the one I've been waiting for these many moons. You should have come sooner and relieved my anxious heart. Isn't life going to be one long hour of glorious bliss now that we know each other?

DEAN. Sweet daffodil, don't be cool to me because we have just met. Let us pretend that we are old, old friends.

JANE. Well, yes, but not *too* old because I like to be young. I don't want even friendship that is old. Don't you adore youth and being young?

DEAN. Ah, yes, but (*sighs*) don't talk of friendship—it makes me sad.

JANE. Prunes an' pickles! You're a queer one. I thought you wanted us to be friends. If you are as fickle as all that you better take your hat and go. Avaunt, skidoo, *go*.

DEAN. No, let me explain. (*Takes her hand.*) I don't want friendship because I—you are so enchanting, I want—love.

JANE (*making eyes at him*). Well, you handsome heart-stealer, that suits me all right. I'm fond of love myself.

DEAN. Oh, you beautiful lily of the valley! (*He puts his arm about her, she leans her head on his shoulder.* NORMA *comes on quietly at back and stands gazing at them in amazement.*)

JANE. I hope I'm the first young lady you've ever loved, the very first, or I can't be happy.

DEAN. Yes, indeed, the very first, my angel. (NORMA *slips off and brings her mother in, the latter acting horrified as she sees the love making. She slips off and returns with* MR. GREEN.)

(*Enter* GRANDPA *from one side, and* AUNT SUSAN *from the other at back.* MRS. G. *and* NORMA *motion for silence.*)

JANE. Love is the greatest thing in the world.

DEAN. Yes, inexpressibly so.

JANE. Are you sure you love me?

DEAN. Oh, inexpressibly so.

SUSAN (*with a shriek*). Oh, the double-dyed wretch!

GRANDPA (*angrily*). W'y, the black-hearted pirate. (JANE *jumps up with a scream;* DEAN *jumps up and nearly falls over with confusion.*)

MRS. GREEN. What—does—this—mean? (MR. G. *echoes "Yes, what does it mean?" Then* GRANDPA *and* SUSAN *ask it, each in more horrified tone.*)

JANE. I—er—I—w'y, Mrs. Green, I—wanted to ask if I can go out for the evening?

MRS. GREEN. Go and—go quickly. (JANE *hurries off.*)

DEAN (*much crushed*). Who—is—that?

GREEN. It's our maid, of course.

SUSAN. The impertinent little flippety flapper!

DEAN (*with groan*). I thought—it was—your daughter.

NORMA. How dare you? Do you think I'd carry on like that? Father, put him out of the house.

GRANDPA. Let me thrash him first. (*Starts to take off coat.*)

GREEN (*to* DEAN). Get out and stay out. (DEAN *goes in a rush.*)

(*Enter* FRANK EVANS.)

FRANK. Good evening. I couldn't make any one hear me, so I came on in as I heard you here. Belle Horton said you want to see me, Norma.

GREEN (*cordially*). Glad to see you, Frank. Hope you'll spend the evening.

MRS. GREEN (*graciously*). Yes, do stay, Frank.

GRANDPA. Yes, Frank, we sure do like to have you drop in. You're—well, you're sort of like one of the family.

NORMA. Yes, he's going to stay. Let's sit down, folks. (*They all sit.*) If you'll promise to be real nice to him and not to object to what he says, Frank has something to tell you. Something very nice, *I* think.

FRANK. I hope you won't think I'm presuming, though of course I'm not half good enough for her, but I—I want to ask you for your daughter, Mr. Green.

NORMA (*jumping up and going to* MR. G.). He means me, daddy.

FRANK. I'm not much of a talker, but—

GRANDPA (*interrupting*). Who wants a glib talker in the family? I've seen young men that had *too much* to say.

SUSAN. Oh, yes, I should say *so*.

MRS. GREEN. Well, Joseph, why don't you answer Frank? Why don't you tell him we think he'll make just a fine son-in-law and we're glad he's the one Norma fancies?

SUSAN. Yes, he's just the one for Norma, isn't he father?

GRANDPA. I'll say he suits me fine.

NORMA (*happily*). He does me, too, Grandpa.

GREEN. Guess there's nothing left for me to say, Frank.

(*All beam happily, smiling upon* NORMA *and* FRANK, *who take center of stage.*)

CURTAIN

FRIENDLY ADVICE

CHARACTERS

SAUL MERTON, *rather elderly.*

MARTHA MERTON, *his wife.*

EDITH, *their daughter, a young lady.*

HULDA, *their maid, no longer young.*

JAKE JAY, *an old bachelor who dresses queerly and acts more so.*

SCENE: *The kitchen of the* MERTONS *with table in center of floor.*

Discovered, MR. *and* MRS. MERTON, *sitting at table, eating.*

MRS. MERTON. Will you have some more coffee, Saul?

MR. MERTON. Yes, I'll take another cup; it's pretty good.

MRS. MERTON (*surprised*). W'y, there isn't any more. I didn't s'pose you'd say yes; you never do take the third cup. 'Tain't good for you any way. I was just bein' polite, askin' you to have it.

MR. MERTON. Oh, all right. I don't re'lly care for another cup. I was just takin' it to be polite. Say, what does Jake Jay come over here so often for?

MRS. MERTON. I ain't asked him what's his object but I have an idea that he's takin' a fancy to Hulda.

MR. MERTON. You don't say. I think that would be sensible for 'em both. We might help 'em along with some good advice.

MRS. MERTON. I don't know's anybody who had as hard a time proposin' as *you* did is capable of givin' advice.

MR. MERTON. Is that so? I s'pose you think I was scart to perpose, eh?

MRS. MERTON. Scart? You didn't have the courage of a grasshopper. I come pretty near marryin' two other fellers while I was waitin' for you to brace up.

MR. MERTON (*rising*). Then you might give Hulda some advice, seein' I'm not capable of it. (*Aside.*) But that won't keep me from tellin' Jake a few things. (*Goes off.*)

(*Enter* HULDA.)

HULDA. Shall I clear up now, Mis' Merton? (*Begins to stack up dishes.*)

MRS. MERTON. Yes, we're all through, but leave a place here so's Edith can eat when she comes down. She's late this morning, being as she like to never got in from that party. (*Rises.*) Jake Jay seems to be real attentive to you, Hulda.

HULDA (*pleased*). Oh, now, do you think so? I didn't know whether it meant anything or not, men are so sort of flirtatious. (*Takes dirty dishes over to small table at side.*)

MRS. MERTON. Jake isn't the handsomest man in the county, an' he dresses sort of queer, but he'd make a good husband. I'd take him if I was you, Hulda, but don't be too willing. You just make him think you don't know's you want him. He'll be all the more anxious if he ain't sure you want him.

HULDA. Thank you, ma'am. That sounds like real good advice. I'll remember what you say. I'll be sort of indiff'rent like—is that the way?

MRS. MERTON. Yes, that's the idee. Act like you don't give half a fish hook whether he smiles on you or not. The more you edge off, the more he'll want you. Men are like that—sort of queer creatures.

HULDA. Yes, ma'am, I guess so. Thank you for tellin' me. (MRS. M. *goes off;* HULDA *works about the table, humming a song.*) Guess I'll dust up the other room while I wait for Miss Edith. (*Goes off.*)

(*Enter* MR. MERTON *and* JAKE JAY.)

JAKE. Thought I'd just stop in a few minutes, seein' I was goin' by.

MR. MERTON. That's right, Jake. I like to see folks friendly. Drop in ev'ry once in awhile. If the missus or I aren't here, w'y, you can visit with Hulda. She's a real nice woman, Hulda is.

JAKE (*trying to be unconcerned*). That so? I don't know her very well. Maybe she wouldn't care much 'bout visitin' with me.

MR. MERTON. Yes, I think she would. I have an idea that Hulda likes you, Jake. Why don't you go in an' win her? She's a good catch for you—likes to work, fine cook, nice disposition. You could do a lot worse, Jake.

JAKE. Yes, I guess she's all right—but, well, I'm no great shucks—don't see why she'd fancy me, do you?

MR. MERTON. Now, don't develop an inferiority complex. Think you're the finest in town, an' make her think so. Brag yourself up to her, an' make her think you're some big pun'kins. Just you go ahead an' let her know you're a real catch.

JAKE (*bracing up*). Say, I'll do that. Thank you for tellin' me. It takes a real friend to give good advice, Saul. I'll try to make use of it, an' much obliged.

MR. MERTON. Excuse me, Jake. I want to see what the missus wants done with the potatoes I bought. (*Exit.*)

JAKE (*nervously*). What if Hulda'd come in now. What'd I say to her? (*Thinks.*) Come to think of it, there's quite a few things I can mention to let her know I'm not such a bum catch.

(*Enter* HULDA.)

HULDA. Good morning, Mr. Jay. It's a nice morning. (*She stands at table.*)

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JAKE (*going and standing beside her*). Yes, it is, Miss Hulda an' I'm feelin' pretty good, too, 'cause I've finished paying for that place I bought over in the Banning addition. Real nice little house, all my own.

HULDA (*going to other side of table*). I don't think very much of that part of town; it's sort of barren, to my notion.

JAKE (*following her around and standing by her*). Oh, well, but you wait till it's improved. It's goin' to be a pretty part of town then. Say, I put a thousand dollars in the bank last year; that wasn't so bad, was it?

HULDA. Humph, a thousand dollars ain't an awful lot. My cousin Henry did better'n that. I sure like my cousin Henry. (*Goes back to other side of table.*)

JAKE (*aside*). Drat her cousin Hank! (*Goes around table.*) Say, Miss Hulda, I've ordered a new suit of clothes. You better believe they're some clothes, too. I'm goin' to look as fussed-up as a box of monkeys when I git togged up. You won't hardly know me.

HULDA. Dear me, Mr. Jay, I don't know's it matters to me how you look. I'm not one to pay attention to a man's clothes. (*Goes back to other side of table.*)

JAKE (*following her*). What you s'pose? I took out some life insurance t'other day, an' the doctor said I have awful good health; said I can work hard for the next thirty years. Don't you guess I'm a pretty good one to look after a woman?

HULDA. Oh, I guess women don't think too much 'bout things like that. What they think of is whether they like a man well 'nough to make pies for him, an' darn his socks the rest his life. I'll have to see what Mis' Merton wants me to do next. (*Exit.*)

JAKE (*disconsolately*). Shucks, I didn't make a hit as big as a pinhead. She likes me like I was a patch of thistles. I don't believe Saul's advice is any good. (*Sighs.*)

(*Enter* MRS. MERTON.)

MRS. MERTON. W'y, the idee of you having to stay here by your lonesome, with no one to talk to, Mr. Jay. Sit down. (*She sits.*)

JAKE. I been talkin' to Miss Hulda. Say, Mis' Merton, she don't like me a tall. I can't make a bit of headway with 'er. I'm no good at pleasin' wimmin. (*Sits gloomily.*)

MRS. MERTON. Oh, fiddle-de-dee! That's no way to talk. I'm sure Hulda likes you. See here, let me give you some advice. Sort of make her jealous. Make her think some other wimmin like you, an' that you have taken a fancy to somebody else. You try that.

JAKE. Seems like that might work. I'll try it.

MRS. MERTON (*rising*). I'll send Hulda in here an' you tell her some things to make her jealous. (*Exit.*)

JAKE. I'll have to think fast to get some idees for makin' her jealous. Who'll I talk 'bout? (*Thinks.*)

(*Enter* HULDA.)

HULDA. W'y, Mr. Jay, are you still here? I s'posed you'd be gone. It—it's a nice day, ain't it? (*Aside.*) I wish I dared act like I was glad to see him. (*Fusses at table.*)

JAKE. I'm just sort of loafin' 'round this forenoon, 'cause I'm goin' to take a lady out to the movies this afternoon an' then to the Bon Ton for supper. I guess we'll have a swell time for she's a lot of fun to go out with, bein' so lively.

HULDA. I s'pose you'll enjoy it. (*Aside.*) He's never asked me to go to a show. He don't care 'bout me.

JAKE. Guess I'll have to buy a car soon. There are two ladies have promised to go ridin' with me any time I can get off. We'd have some reg'lar picnics. I sure like to go off car ridin', 'specially if I have a jolly lady along.

HULDA. I shan't let him see I'd like to go. (*To* JAKE.) Well, I can't listen to your plans, an' course it's nothin' to me what wimmin you take out. I got to tend to my work. (*Goes off, head up.*)

JAKE. Shuckins, now, I didn't make her jealous a tall. She don't care a broomstraw 'bout me. I'm goin' home an'—an' hang myself, or fall int' the lake.

(*Enter* EDITH.)

EDITH. Good morning, Mr. Jay. Haven't the folks any manners, letting you stay here all by yourself? Why didn't you tell me you were here and I'd have been entertaining you? Shall I tell you a funny story to cheer you up? You look horribly glum. Have you lost some money on the stock market. Excuse me, won't you, if I get me something to eat? I'm most starved. (*Pours some coffee and spreads some bread.*)

JAKE. I *am* glum. Say, Miss Edith, you young folks know an awful lot nowadays. Maybe you can tell me something I want to know.

EDITH. Sure I can. Just tell me your troubles and I'll give you yards of good advice, free of charge, and warranted to help you instantly.

JAKE. Well, er, w'y, well, what would you do if you liked a young woman a whole lot an'—er, well, wanted to—you know, marry her?

EDITH. Say, I'd tell her so and tell her quick. Tell her she's the fairest rose in the garden, and the sparkling dew on the lily, and the shimmering moonbeam on the mountain of love, and ask her to go to the preacher's with you as soon as she can comb her glinting tresses.

JAKE. Honest to goodness, would you? Wouldn't you try to make her jealous, talkin' 'bout somebody else, or something like that?

EDITH. I'll say not. You've got to make love these days right from the shoulder out, and be spry about it, or some other fellow will get in ahead of you. Tell 'em you love 'em and spread it on thick.

JAKE. Honest to goodness, I believe you're right. Thank you, Miss Edith. If I get her to say "Yes," I'll buy you the nicest box of candy in town. Say, you couldn't tell Hulda I want to see her, could you?

EDITH. Oh-h-h-ho, so that's the way the wind blows. My stars, why didn't you tell me so before? I could just as well have had that box of candy a week ago. I'll send the fair lady here, sooner if not quicker. (*Exit.*)

JAKE. Honest to goodness, I don't know what I'll say to Hulda; I'm so upset I can't think; but I'm goin' to say *something* an' say it quick. (*Fusses nervously with his hair and necktie.*)

(*Enter* HULDA.)

HULDA. Sakes alive, Mr. Jay, are you still here? I guess you must be expecting to spend the day. I'm going to make dumplings for lunch this noon; maybe you'd like to have some of 'em.

JAKE. Dumplings? I don't care for any, thank you—that is, I mean I'd like some if you make them but say, Miss Hulda, dearest, I—I—

HULDA (*aside*). Oh, oh, he called me—*dearest*. (*She goes to other side of table.*) Oh, wouldn't it be grand if he meant it?

JAKE (*following her*). I want to ask you, Star of Heaven, if you'll go to the show with me this afternoon. That other woman—the one I spoke of, can't go. Will you go with me?

HULDA. W'y, I—I—don't know. This is so sudden. (*She goes to other side of table.*) Are you sure you mean it?

JAKE (*following her to other side of table*). I want to ask you if you'll go riding with me when I get my new car?

HULDA. What about those other wimmin who were going with you?

JAKE. Oh—them! I don't want 'em. I don't want anybody but you. Say, Hulda, Darling Sunlight on the Mountain, I—I'm so in love with you, I can't half tell it.

HULDA (*amazed*). Isn't this—absolutely—wonderful?

JAKE. Shimmering dewdrops on the lily, I want to marry you. Can't we go to the preacher as soon as you get your glinting tresses combed?

HULDA (*retreating to other side of table*). I—I guess you've lost your mind. I never heard a man talk like this.

JAKE (*following her*). Plague take it all, Hulda, I can't suit you no matter how I talk. I'm goin' home an' shoot myself.

HULDA (*with scream*). No, no, you'll do no such a thing. I'll marry you, if you're sure you want me.

JAKE (*on knees before her*). Ain't that what I'm tryin' to tell you?

CURTAIN

PEGGY MAKES UP HER MIND

CHARACTERS

HENRY WESTON.
ALICIA, *his wife.*
PEGGY, *their daughter.*
SILAS, HENRY'S *brother.*
AUNT ANN, MRS. WESTON'S *sister.*
BERT BARCLAY, *the chauffeur.*
JOYCE, *the maid.*
PERKINS, *the butler.*

ACT I

SCENE: *The* WESTON *living room.*
Discovered, MRS. WESTON *and* AUNT ANN.

MRS. WESTON. I assure you, Ann, I'm just at my wit's end to know what to do with that girl. She is wearing me into my grave, even though Dr. Chalmers says I'm in perfectly good health.

AUNT ANN. Really, my dear, don't worry. She will marry some day and settle down. She's very nice looking.

MRS. WESTON. If it were not that I hate to wish him into a sea of trouble, I'd pray that some man would marry her tomorrow. (*Sighs.*)

AUNT ANN. To think she is as she is. In *our* day young ladies were obedient, and mild-mannered, and did as they were bid without discussion.

MRS. WESTON (*sadly*). I can't think who is to blame; I've tried hard enough to make Peggy different. Even her father can do nothing with her.

(*Enter* HENRY WESTON.)

HENRY. I should think you women between you could do something with Peggy. She spends money like a Turkish mogul. I won't have it. You've got to restrain her. I mean it.

MRS. WESTON. Very well, my dear, I'll talk to her. I'll tell her she really must be more careful. I'll be very firm with her.

AUNT ANN. Yes, indeed, Henry, we'll both reason with Peggy. You are quite right in thinking she spends too much.

HENRY. Just lay the law down to her. She's got to understand who's boss here. (*Exit.*)

(*Enter* PEGGY.)

PEGGY. Mother, I've been searching for you. I want to tell you that I *must* have some new clothes. I want six new gowns immediately.

MRS. WESTON. Oh, no, my dear. It's impossible. Papa just said—

PEGGY. Oh, he did, did he? Do you suppose I care for his old-fogy objections? I must have six new gowns.

AUNT ANN. Really, dear, not so many. Perhaps two—

PEGGY. I said *six* and six it must be—two evening gowns, two sports, and two for afternoon affairs. I want them today.

MRS. WESTON. Six are out of the question. Papa said that—

PEGGY. Don't keep repeating "papa said" like a parrot. Will you two come with me to buy them?

AUNT ANN. I *am* fond of selecting new gowns. I'll go get ready.

MRS. WESTON. But mind now, Peggy, that you don't ask for more than six—that's the limit.

PEGGY. Well, six are all that I want, dearie. Come on, Aunt Ann. (*The two go off together.*)

(*Enter* HENRY WESTON.)

HENRY. I came back to tell you that you must *insist* on Peggy cutting down her accounts. I won't stand the way she buys everything she happens to fancy.

MRS. WESTON. Yes, dear, I talked to her. I was very firm. I told her she simply *couldn't* have more than six new gowns. We're going after them now.

HENRY (*loudly*). Six? Six dresses? She shan't have them, I say.

MRS. WESTON. Oh, come now. You don't want the girl to go naked. (*Goes off quickly.*)

HENRY. Oh, these women. They rile me up till I get so angry my liver simply flops over and sets my dyspepsia to acting up like a war horse.

(*Enter* SILAS WESTON.)

SILAS. Sit down, Henry, sit down. Don't prance about like a hungry chimpanzee. Compose yourself; I want to talk to you seriously.

HENRY (*as they sit*). Very well. I hope it isn't money troubles.

SILAS. Not at all. You remember our friend, Morgan Harvey, a real captain of industry, rich, influential—all that could be desired in a man.

HENRY. Certainly; a very fine man. What about him?

SILAS. His son, Delbert, is like the father—a splendid young man, a grand matrimonial prize. He's here in the city.

HENRY. We must have him up for a dinner. I'd like to meet him.

SILAS. Now listen. He saw Peggy at some sort of an affair and he's quite taken with her. The thing for us to do is to make a match between them. It would be wonderful if she could catch him.

HENRY (*gloomily*). Heaven help him if she did. I can't imagine what ails the headstrong young cyclone. She would make a man miserable.

SILAS. Oh, now, Peggy's all right. She just needs taming. I say we must give her to understand that she's to play-up to Delbert Harvey. I'll help you but we must be cautious; got to go about it right.

(*Enter* PEGGY, *dressed for street.*)

PEGGY. Greetings, darlings. What mischief are you hatching? You look guilty.

SILAS. And you, my dear, look beautiful. You grow better-looking right along. I suppose some man will be marrying you soon, lucky fellow.

HENRY. Don't hurry the girl, Silas. We want to keep her with us as long as we can.

PEGGY. You'll keep me all right, popsie. I don't want to marry.

SILAS. Oh, but you should if some grand man comes along. You don't want the other girls to get the best catches. Get in ahead of them.

HENRY. Yes, we've got to think about that.

PEGGY. Don't waste your energies. I'm not ready to settle down.

SILAS. Speaking of husbands, there's a fine fellow in town I'd like to see you marry. He's good-looking, of wealthy family, splendid morals—

PEGGY (*scornfully*). Ye-ah, one of these tin gods. I wouldn't look at him.

HENRY. Well, you shall. If you can secure Delbert Harvey, you're going to. Hear me?

PEGGY. Delbert Harvey—I don't know who he is, but I *refuse* to look at him.

HENRY. We're going to have him here to dinner and you'll be nice to him. I want you to marry him.

SILAS. Now, be sensible, Peggy. He's a wonderful young man and—

PEGGY. I won't speak to him. (*Calls loudly.*) Oh, Perkins, Perkins, come here.

(*Enter* PERKINS.)

PERKINS (*bowing in most dignified manner*). Yes, Miss Peggy. What is it?

PEGGY (*acting hysterical*). I won't marry that fellow. I'm in love with Perkins. Oh, I love him madly. (*Throws herself into butler's arms.*)

SILAS (*as he and* HENRY *jump up*). What's this foolishness?

PEGGY (*screaming*). I love Perkins, oh, I do, I do! (*Hangs onto him.*)

HENRY (*shouting*). Drop that girl, Perkins.

PERKINS (*frantic as* PEGGY *clings to him*). I—I can't, sir, really.

PEGGY. Perkins and I are going to be married.

PERKINS (*horrified*). But I've got a wife, Miss Peggy. (SILAS *and* HENRY *try to pry her loose from* PERKINS.)

PEGGY. Well, you can get a divorce from her, darling Perkins. You and I are going to be married. Yes. (*Louder.*) YES!

HENRY (*pulling her from* PERKINS *and thrusting her into a chair*). I'll have you put in an insane asylum.

PERKINS (*much agitated*). Excuse me, sir. I'm busy. (*Hurries off.*)

SILAS. This is most disgraceful. What will Perkins think?

PEGGY (*calmly*). Well, I'll teach you two to pick out a husband for me. Don't you say another word about my marrying that Delbert Harvey or I'll make Perkins elope with me. So, there! (*Goes off, indignantly.*)

SILAS (*brokenly*). And to think she's your daughter. I'd sell her in a slave market—if they had 'em any more.

HENRY (*savagely*). I'll get even with her yet; see if I don't.

SILAS. If there is any way I can help you, just count on me.

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *As above.*

Discovered, MR. *and* MRS. WESTON, SILAS *and* PEGGY.

MRS. WESTON. And to think, Henry, that you've had an automobile accident. It makes me so nervous I'm simply sick.

PEGGY. What you sick about? He wasn't hurt.

HENRY. Some one should be sick about the car; it's a wreck.

SILAS. You certainly should discharge Peter. It was all his fault.

HENRY. I have discharged him; gave him his walking papers this morning, the beef-brained mutt.

MRS. WESTON. Oh, that's too bad. I liked Peter.

PEGGY. So did I. He would do whatever I told him to, even to speeding something scandalous.

HENRY. Wish I'd known it! I'd have shipped him sooner.

SILAS. Have you hired a new man yet? Hope you find a good one.

HENRY. Yes, I've hired one. A young fellow who seems very capable.

PEGGY. Oh, I'm glad he's young. Peter was too old. A young chauffeur will look more aristocratic in our car. I hope he wears a stylish livery.

HENRY. See here, young lady, just keep your mind off this young man. He's hired to drive *me* about, and your mother occasionally, but I'm not going to have you traveling about with him. It's not proper.

PEGGY. Stars and garter-snakes, is that so? Understand right now, popsie, that I'll ride with him all I please. I'll flirt with him if I take a notion. I'll even elope with him if I want to.

SILAS (*jumping up and stepping about excitedly*). Heavens and hail stones! Can't you do anything with this girl? Talking of eloping with the hired man. She ought to be—spanked.

MRS. WESTON. She doesn't mean anything, Silas, really.

PEGGY. Yes, I do. I think it's romantic to run off with the family chauffeur. Is the young man here, popsie?

HENRY. Yes, he came an hour ago. He's busy with the car.

PEGGY (*ringing bell*). Mother wants to see what he looks like, I'm sure.

(*Enter* PERKINS.)

PERKINS (*bowing to* HENRY). Is there something, sir?

PEGGY. Yes, Perkins, I want you to tell the chauffeur we wish to see him at once.

HENRY. Positively, no. There is no need of—

PEGGY (*stamping foot*). Send him here at once, Perkins, or—(*She makes a move toward* PERKINS.)

PERKINS. Yes, certainly, Miss. (*He dashes off.*)

MRS. WESTON. I *am* anxious to see him, Henry. If he's real nice I may have him drive me to the coast this summer.

(*Enter* BARCLAY, *wearing coveralls.*)

BARCLAY (*courteously*). You wish to see me, Mr. Weston?

HENRY. I thought you may as well meet the family. Let me present my wife, my brother, Silas Weston, and my daughter, Patricia. (*They speak;* BARCLAY *bows to each.*) We hope you'll enjoy being with us.

MRS. WESTON. And we do hope you're a safe driver.

BARCLAY. I have good recommendations, Mrs. Weston.

PEGGY (*imperiously*). I think I'll feel surer of you after I've tested your driving. I want to go over to the west side. I'll be ready in ten minutes.

BARCLAY (*to Henry*). I'm going over the car just now, sir.

PEGGY (*loftily*). I want the car in ten minutes.

BARCLAY (*to Henry*). I'm busy just now, Mr. Weston, looking the car over.

PEGGY. I said—in TEN minutes, chauffeur.

HENRY (*nervously, to Peggy*). He can't go now; he can't get away.

PEGGY (*angrily*). Will you have that car here in ten *minutes?*

BARCLAY (*to Peggy*). I take orders from your father, Miss Weston. (*Bows and goes off.*)

SILAS (*gleefully*). Good, Henry, he's fine! I like a man the women can't boss.

PEGGY (*excitedly*). Of all the nerve. I'll get even with him for this. I'll teach him several things. He'll surely regret this.

HENRY. Now see here, Peggy, you let Barclay be. Let me hear of your bothering him and I'll—

PEGGY. Oh, no you won't, and I'll do as I please. (*To her mother.*) He is nice looking; even in those coveralls you might take him for a prince in disguise.

SILAS (*nervously*). Now, don't you try to flirt with him. He's your father's hired man.

PEGGY (*stamping foot and waving arms*). I'll do as I—PLEASE!

HENRY. No, you won't. I'll—(MRS. WESTON *says, "Come dear," and takes him from room, followed by Silas.*)

PEGGY (*angrily*). The idea of that chauffeur refusing to obey me. He certainly has something to learn. (*Musingly*): I wonder how I'd like a cave man. What a masterful lover he'd make. He really has nice eyes—I like his composed manner, too.

(*Enter* AUNT ANN.)

AUNT ANN. What are you meditating about, all by your lonesome? (*Sits.*)

PEGGY. The new chauffeur popsie has hired.

AUNT ANN. An impossible subject, my dear. Occupy your mind with something loftier than the man who drives the car. I want you to come with me tonight. The new tenor in the opera has a wonderful voice. I know you'll enjoy his

songs. Music is *such* an inspiration, don't you think? It sets one's soul to soaring far above the sordid things of life. The new tenor will thrill you.

PEGGY (*musingly*). His eyes are expressive and his manner is—

AUNT ANN. What? Have you met that singer already?

PEGGY. I—it was the new chauffeur I was speaking about. You will like him, Aunt Ann.

AUNT ANN (*coldly*). That is enough about your father's hired man. I'm really surprised at you. The papers say this new singer has a specially attractive costume for the last scene of the opera.

PEGGY (*musingly*). It is a surprise to me that a man could look so entrancing in—coveralls.

AUNT ANN. But he doesn't appear in—coveralls.

PEGGY. Oh, I—it is the new chauffeur who wears them.

AUNT ANN. Not another word from you. (*Starts off stage.*)

PEGGY (*following her*). And let me tell you about his eyes, Aunt Ann.

CURTAIN.

ACT III

SCENE: *As above.* (JOYCE *enters, comes to center and stands, hands clasped, eyes upturned.*)

JOYCE (*gushingly*). Ah, he is handsome. Such eyes! My heart palpitates and leaps and turns somersaults when he looks at me so tenderly. His voice—ah, what a tenderness when he says sweet little nothings to me.

(PEGGY *comes on just after she begins to speak and stands at the back, listening.*)

JOYCE. How noble he looks in his uniform. My eyes never weary of gazing at his manly, matchless form. He is

a king among men. And to think, ah, to think that he loves me—for I know that he does. (PEGGY *draws nearer, looking startled and angry.*) What a wonderful ride we had yesterday, and how noble he looks driving the car. How sublime it is to feel that he is mine—all mine.

PEGGY (*springing forward and grabbing* JOYCE'S *arm*). You wicked young woman—you are discharged. Do you think we employ you to stand about mooning in this manner?

JOYCE (*frightened and pleading*). Oh, I—I—oh, please, Miss, I didn't mean any harm. Don't have me discharged. I'm so happy here where I can see him every day. Have pity, please. I—I— (*Weeps.*)

PEGGY. To think you'd carry on so when we've been so good to you. You should be—be—burned at the stake. (*Shakes her by arm.*)

JOYCE. Oh, what have I done? Is it wrong to fall in love with a nice, splendid policeman, who has been so kind to me?

PEGGY (*aghast*). A—a policeman?

JOYCE. Yes, Miss, the one who spends the afternoons at the next corner. How can I help loving him, he's that handsome?

PEGGY. Of course it's all right, Joyce. I didn't mean a thing. Love him all you want to. It's all right. I was merely talking.

JOYCE (*relieved*). Oh, thank you. I'm glad you don't mind. (*Exit.*)

PEGGY. Oh, what a fright I had. (*Hand over heart.*) My heart vibrated between my throat and my feet until I felt I was going to simply—pass—out. I thought she was talking about Bert Barclay, our chauffeur. Why (*paces nervously*), when I thought he was *making love* to her I was sure I'd faint —though I never have. What is the matter with me? Why do I feel this way? He won't take orders from me, he snubs me, he doesn't care a snap about me and I—I—love him. I certainly do. What is to become of me? My heart—hurts—me——so. (*Sinks into a chair.*)

(*Enter* BARCLAY.)

BARCLAY. Pardon me, I thought Mr. Weston was here. I—what is it, Miss Weston? Are you ill?

PEGGY (*leaning back in chair, slumping and wringing hands*). Oh, it's my heart. I--I—have a spell. (*Groans.*)

BARCLAY (*bending over her*). What can I do? Dearest, don't be sick. (*Kneels by her chair.*) I can't stand it. It breaks my heart to see you sick. (*Puts arm about her.*)

PEGGY (*leaning head against him*). I feel better—now—with you here. I—I wonder—if I'll—die.

BARCLAY (*with anguish*). No, no, don't mention such a thing. I could not endure it. I—I—love you, Peggy. Tell me you feel better.

PEGGY (*weakly*). If you love me, sweet boy, I think I'm better.

(*Enter* AUNT ANN, *hastily.*)

AUNT ANN. Here, what is this? For shame. Chauffeur, take your arms away from her. (*Steps about excitedly.*)

PEGGY. No, no, he has to hold me because I'm sick.

AUNT ANN (*rings, then calls*). Perkins, hurry, oh, hurry.

(*Enter* PERKINS.)

PERKINS. What is it, ma'am? (PEGGY *leans against* BARCLAY *with eyes closed.*) Shall I call a doctor?

AUNT ANN. Get her father and mother. (*He dashes off.*) Let me hold her, Barclay. (PEGGY *says, "No, no," and clings to him.*)

(*Enter* MRS. WESTON, HENRY *and* SILAS, *hastily.*)

HENRY. What's this? Who gave you permission to hug my daughter? Leave the room. (BARCLAY *and* PEGGY *hug each other tighter.*)

MRS. WESTON. This is disgraceful. Peggy, go to your room.

BARCLAY. She is ill; can't you see?

SILAS. Ill nothing. Hugging—the chauffeur. We're disgraced.

PEGGY (*reviving and sitting up*). Oh, be still, you folks. You give me the willies.

MRS. WESTON. Oh, the shame of this. (*She and* AUNT ANN *weep.*)

HENRY. I'll send you to a reform school, young lady.

PEGGY (*to* BARCLAY). Are you sure you love me, Beautiful Eyes?

BARCLAY. Altogether too much. (*Gets up, assumes attitude of despair.*) What shall I do? Peggy will never forgive me.

PEGGY. If you love me everything is all right. We'll be married.

HENRY (*sternly*). You've said so, now you've got to stand by it.

BARCLAY. Dearest (*takes her hand*), I've deceived you. Will you forgive me?

PEGGY. I don't care what you've done; we're going to be married.

AUNT ANN. What a—calamity.

SILAS (*dancing about happily*). This is fine. Make her keep her promise, Henry.

BARCLAY. Sweetheart, I'm not a—a—chauffeur; I'm Delbert Harvey.

SILAS. A splendid young man, fine family—make a grand husband.

BARCLAY. I tricked you to get you to marry me. Will you forgive me?

PEGGY (*angrily*). You deceitful bunch. (*Looks at* BARCLAY, *changes to smiles.*) You're the limit, but—I love you.

CURTAIN.

THE AWAKENING

CHARACTERS

DR. AMOS CHATIM
REV. LLOYD BARROW
MRS. WILLOBY
MISS QUIMBY, *the nurse*
MRS. JACORS, *a philanthropist*

SCENE: *A living-room, with table, chairs, etc. and a large easy chair, with pillow, for the invalid.*

(DR. CHATIM *enters, followed by the nurse.*)

DOCTOR. Well, nurse, how is she this morning? Better, I hope.

NURSE. I can't tell. The truth is, she claims to be worse, but I can't discover that she is. Really, doctor, what is the matter with Mrs. Willoby? Is she in serious condition?

DOCTOR. I can find nothing radically wrong. What she needs is an awakening.

NURSE. Just what I imagined. If she could but *think* she's better we might help her.

DOCTOR. We're going to help her, Miss Quimby. I'm starting a new treatment this morning. Don't be surprised at anything I say, but carry out my plans. I have arranged for helpers, so let them see Mrs. Willoby when they call.

NURSE. Very well, Dr. Chatim. I'll bring Mrs. Willoby in now. (*He nods assent and she goes off.*)

DOCTOR (*coming up and speaking musingly*). I hope my treatment will be effective. The mind is often harder to help than the body and queer measures are sometimes necessary.

(*Enter* NURSE, *helping in* MRS. WILLOBY. *She puts her in easy chair with pillow back of her head and robe about her.*)

NURSE. I hope you're comfortable.

DOCTOR. Better this morning? You ought to be feeling just real happy and energetic.

MRS. WILLOBY. No, doctor, I'm no better. I believe I feel worse, if anything. I'm afraid my condition is so serious there is no help for me. (*Sighs, leans head back and closes eyes.*)

DOCTOR. I would not tell you so, dear Mrs. Willoby, but since you mention it, I agree that your words may be true.

MRS. WILLOBY. Isn't that sad? I'm too young to be laid away. Why is life so cruel to me? (*Wipes eyes.*)

DOCTOR. I wonder if I may speak plainly to you, as friend rather than a physician. (*Nurse busies herself picking up, mixing medicine, etc.*)

MRS. WILLOBY. Yes, Doctor Chatim.

DOCTOR. If you are to pass from life would it not be a comfort to you to feel you have left part of yourself that will go on working for humanity, benefiting sad lives, year upon year after you are gone? You have ample means, Mrs. Willoby. Why not prepare for death by giving some of your fortune where it will be a continual blessing?

MRS. WILLOBY. I—I hardly know what to say. I—

DOCTOR. Don't decide now. I'll be in tonight and we can talk about it further. Perhaps you'd like to be thinking about the matter. Be a good lady and don't slap your nurse. Goodbye. (*She and nurse answer; he leaves.*)

NURSE. Shall I read to you, Mrs. Willoby?

MRS. WILLOBY. No, I want to think. I must be worse than I imagined. I suppose I might do some good with part of my money. Perhaps I haven't used as much as I should to help others. (*Rests with eyes closed.*)

NURSE (*musingly*). Doctor Chatim is wonderful. I think it is quite safe to follow his suggestions. (*There is a knock;* NURSE admits the REV. LLOYD BARROW.)

BARROW (*as he enters*). I wonder if I may have a little visit with Mrs. Willoby.

NURSE. Yes, I think she will be glad to see you. (*He goes over and shakes hands with* MRS. W.)

BARROW. I am more than sorry you are ill, Mrs. Willoby. I wanted to tell you that I think of you and am hoping for your recovery. (NURSE *places a chair for him.*)

MRS. WILLOBY. You are very kind. I'm discouraged about getting better.

BARROW. You are bound to be better—if not here, then in the home beyond. Do you know, I have been wondering if you have heard of the home we are starting for crippled children. We have a pleasant location, some very fine doctors in attendance, and as many children as can be cared for. It is a wonderful work, taking in these afflicted children and restoring the poor little bodies. You can't imagine how happy they are there, with a prospect of getting well. The only drawback is the lack of funds. We need money to build on another wing, and to equip a sun-porch.

MRS. WILLOBY. It must be interesting. I hadn't heard about it.

BARROW. I have been thinking how fine it would be if you gave a few thousand dollars to this home, putting it in trust so there would be money for years to come. Wouldn't you like to think of giving a strong body to a number of boys and girls? Why, the influence of it would be almost unending.

MRS. WILLOBY (*eagerly*). I certainly would like it. I'm glad you told me about this. I wish I might see this home and the children who are there for help.

BARROW. If you did, you would be still more inclined to aid them. (*Rises.*) I must go; the doctor won't approve of my tiring you. I hope you will decide favorably about helping the children. (*Bids her and* NURSE *goodbye and goes.*)

NURSE. Wouldn't it be fine to think that year after year your money would help some unfortunate child? It is a wonderful work.

MRS. WILLOBY. I'm glad to have this to think about. I shall find the hours passing more quickly with this to occupy me.

NURSE. I'm sure you will. (*There is a knock;* NURSE *goes over.*)

(*Enter* MRS. JACOBS.)

MRS. JACOBS. The doctor said I might visit the sick lady if I wouldn't stay too long. How are you, my dear? (*Shakes hands with* MRS. W.; NURSE *gives her a chair.*)

MRS. WILLOBY. I believe I'm a little better. I feel brighter, I'm sure.

MRS. JACOBS. Good. I think you look ever so much improved. Do you know, I have something on my mind. Are you strong enough to hear about it?

MRS. WILLOBY. Yes, I think so; don't you, Miss Quimby?

NURSE. Yes, I don't think the doctor would object.

MRS. JACOBS. Have you heard about the home that has been started for crippled children?

MRS. WILLOBY. The minister has been telling me. It's very interesting.

MRS. JACOBS. My dear, you don't know how interesting until you visit it. If you could see the boys and girls, some only two or three years old, the dearest, most patient little things, with bad knees, or twisted feet, or bad backs, or perhaps a misplaced hip, you would be determined to help them.

MRS. WILLOBY. I'm thinking of helping build the new wing. I want to give them some of the money I have that isn't doing any good.

MRS. JACOBS. Oh, fine! We need money; but I came to see if you can't work on the women's board and help make this a success.

NURSE. But you know, Mrs. Jacobs, Mrs. Willoby is a sick woman.

MRS. WILLOBY. I'm not so sick. I'm better. I'd love to help with this.

NURSE. If you could gain a little strength each day, it wouldn't be long until you'd be quite energetic, I'm sure.

MRS. JACOBS. Oh, try to get well fast, my dear, for I *do* so want you to work with me on the board. Would you be strong enough?

MRS. WILLOBY. Of course. I'm much better today.

MRS. JACOBS (*rising*). I'll come to see you about it again. We'll have good times together. Goodbye, my dear. (MRS. W. *and* NURSE *answer;* MRS. J. *goes.*)

MRS. WILLOBY. What does the doctor think ails me, anyway?

NURSE. I don't know, Mrs. Willoby.

MRS. WILLOBY (*with energy*). I don't believe I'm going to die.

NURSE (*with decision*). Neither do I.

MRS. WILLOBY. I feel as if I can live for years.

NURSE. It won't surprise me in the least. Just go to work and show the doctor what you can do.

MRS. WILLOBY (*happily*). I certainly shall.

CURTAIN.

MAKE YOUR CHOICE

CHARACTERS

THE CHOOSER, *young man or young woman*
LIFE
DEATH
ADVENTURE
ACHIEVEMENT
POPULARITY
PLEASURE
A FRIEND, *same sex as* CHOOSER

DEATH *should be robed in black hood and robe, with face made very white and dark circles about eyes. It adds to the effect if* LIFE, ADVENTURE, PLEASURE, POPULARITY *and* ACHIEVEMENT *wear crepe paper costumes of various colors, each trimmed with something suggestive of the character.*

SCENE: *Living-room set with a table and numerous chairs.*

DISCOVERED, *the* CHOOSER, *sitting at table.*

CHOOSER (*musingly*). I may as well set my mind at work upon the problem of the future. What am I going to do?

What do I want to do? What decisions am I going to make as to habits, hobbies, and self-development? I'm sure one shouldn't go out from school into the field of work without thinking about these things. (*Sits, thinking.*)

(*Enter* LIFE.)

LIFE. Well, young friend, I am glad to see you looking ahead and giving some thought to the future. It is the only safe way. I wish more young men and women would consider these things.

CHOOSER. Who are you, please? Will you be seated?

LIFE (*sitting*). I am Life. It is with me you journey along the way from the cradle to the grave. I watch you and give you the best in my power, but you young folks don't realize that your own decisions are largely responsible for whether you enjoy me or not. I'd like to introduce here, now, some of the forces you will meet as we pass along the years, from milestone to milestone. May I?

CHOOSER. Certainly, Life. I'll be glad to meet them. (LIFE *goes over and brings on* ADVENTURE.)

LIFE. Allow me to present Adventure, who is anxious to meet you. (*Sits.*)

ADVENTURE. Glad to know you, I'm sure. You're one of the young folks who will soon be going out upon the field of action, and I congratulate you. You will find it interesting, this meeting of new people, taking up new work, and testing out your powers. Now, just let me suggest that you and I travel together a lot. What is life without Adventure—going new places, meeting new faces, enjoying the excitement that makes the days worth while? I'm sure you and I can get along wonderfully well. Won't you choose me for your companion? Adventure offers you a great deal.

CHOOSER. I'll think this over, Adventure.

ADVENTURE. I'll call again. (*Bows and withdraws.*)

LIFE. I'm glad you didn't give Adventure more encouragement. There are more helpful companions you can choose. I'll introduce another who will often allure you. (*Goes over and brings on* PLEASURE.) Let me present Pleasure. (*Sits.*)

CHOOSER. Welcome, Pleasure. I believe you and I have met before.

PLEASURE. Yes, indeed. Glad to see you again, for I want to book you for the journey of Life. Nothing like having a good time, my young friend. You'll find the days are hard; many of them are gloomy; there will be disappointments, of course, and Pleasure (*bows and touches chest with an elaborate gesture*) is the one to cheer you at such a time. Let me be with you often, to drive dull care away. Why grind and slave when you can get out with one like me, who will show you a good time? Will you not choose me for your boon companion?

LIFE. Be not hasty in picking your comrades, lest you regret your choice.

CHOOSER. Thank you, Pleasure, for your interest in me. I'll think this over and decide later.

PLEASURE. I'll keep you in mind and see you again. (*Bows and goes off.*)

LIFE. You are free to pick your associates as you will, but I trust you will not spend too much time in Pleasure's company. Another waits to meet you. (*Goes over and brings in* POPULARITY.) My friend, let me present Popularity. (*Sits.*)

CHOOSER. How do you do, Popularity? Will you be seated?

POPULARITY (*sitting*). I have but a short time to stay. I want to meet a number of young folks. This is a busy time for me, you know. I just dropped in to suggest that we become better acquainted. I feel that I can be of much assistance to you in the journey of Life. Take Popularity with you and you have a passport that makes you welcome most any time, and on most any occasion. Popularity, what prestige it gives one. Wealth may bring you no satisfaction; fame may give you no real enjoyment, but Popularity makes the heart tingle with that I'm-glad-to-be-here feeling. Travel with me and you'll be sought after; you'll be where things are stirring; you'll not be neglected. I can help you for I am Popularity.

LIFE. But the popular person is not always the successful one.

CHOOSER. You appeal to me, Popularity. Most any young person desires your companionship. I prefer, however, to think about it before I go into partnership with you. I don't want to be hasty.

POPULARITY (*crossly*). Oh, very well. You're the loser if you turn me down. (*Bows coldly and departs.*)

LIFE. Our next caller is one who is much admired by both young men and young women. (*Goes over and ushers in* ACHIEVEMENT.) Let me present one of the real, stirring powers of the age. I know you will be interested in Achievement and what he has to offer.

CHOOSER. Very glad to meet you, Achievement. I am honored by your interest in me. Be seated, please.

ACHIEVEMENT (*sitting*). I am interested in the promising young folks who are going forth to join the workers of the day. The real test, you know, is what you *do,* what you accomplish. At the close of the journey, looking back over the years you have traveled, you will get your true enjoyment out of what you have done for yourself and humanity. Yes, what you have accomplished will be the measure of success or failure. Follow me, let me be your guide and counselor. Who can make the years worth while to you? I answer—Achievement. Who can lead you to the harbor of Success and write your name upon the pinnacle of Fame? Again I answer, Achievement. I am here to offer my services. Shall we become partners and travel together?

CHOOSER. I don't want to be a failure. I really long to do something worth while. I want your help, Achievement, for I know you to be a most desirable companion. Whether I want to give you first place along the road through the Future, I do not know. I must think it over. To become a success isn't all.

LIFE. Very true. What you are is more important than what you do.

ACHIEVEMENT. I see you are cautious. That is not a bad characteristic. (*Rises.*) I'll keep you in mind and you can see me later. (*Bows and goes.*)

LIFE. Achievement has many followers. One more visitor I wish to announce. (*Goes over and brings in* FRIEND.) Let me present one of the choice blessings of mankind—a true Friend.

CHOOSER. You are indeed a welcome visitor. Will you be seated?

FRIEND (*sitting*). I cannot make you an alluring proposition, as did your last caller, Achievement. I must confess I may be of no assistance to you in reaching goals, or climbing the hill of Fame; but I offer you the satisfaction of friendship. If the days are bright a friend makes them brighter; if they are dark with the sorrows or perplexities that beset us all, a friend is the silver lining that cheers the gloomiest hours. Wealth may vanish, popularity may wane, success may fail to warm the heart, but a true friend is a comfort and a never-failing joy. Achievement may leave you lonely and unhappy, but a friend stands by you in storm or sunshine, in your ups and downs, at every turn in the journey of the years. If a friend seems worth-while to you, let us travel together, constant and loyal.

LIFE. The most precious gems along the pathway of life are the friends who prove true and fail you not.

CHOOSER. Life, I must have such a friend—but—

(*Enter* DEATH.)

LIFE. Ah, who invited you here?

DEATH. No one. Very few invite Death—I am seldom a welcome caller. I come unbidden, as I came here today. I just dropped in to tell this young person that at the end of the journey, I stand waiting. For some the journey is a long one, for others—shorter; but inevitably I am waiting. From the cradle to the grave; from Life to Death—thus runs the road. When I come wealth is no solace, success fails to comfort, pleasures are forgotten, popularity drops like a faded flower. It is friends that warm the heart and sustain the drooping spirit. Choose wisely, young traveler, for Life is short and the road is rough. (*Waves goodbye and passes off.*)

CHOOSER. Life, I want Adventure, I want Pleasure and Popularity—they are alluring companions. I want to travel with Achievement; but I *must* have a Friend. It is your richest blessing.

LIFE. A wise choice. Let us be going.

CHOOSER (*taking hand of* FRIEND). Come. Together we will follow Life through the unfolding years. (*They follow* LIFE *off as curtain drops.*)

CURTAIN.

WHAT HAPPENED TO BROWN

CHARACTERS

HARVEY BROWN
LULU BROWN, *his wife*
NATHAN GOLDEN, *an uncle*
JULIA, NATHAN'S *wife*
The Maid, JANE
POLICEMAN O'BRIEN
DETECTIVE NOSS
MRS. PEPPER
MRS. BATES

SCENE: *Living-room in the* BROWN *home.*

Discovered, MRS. BROWN, *weeping in a rocking chair* MRS. PEPPER *and* MRS. BATES *standing by her;* POLICEMAN O'BRIEN, *very important, looking about the room;* JANE *standing at back, much frightened.*

O'BRIEN. Had your husband an enemy, ma'am, who might have murdered him, do ye think?

MRS. BROWN (*throwing up her hands with a scream*). Oh, don't suggest that he was murdered. (*Groans.*)

MRS. PEPPER. Shame on you now, officer, to talk to her about her husband being dead when she's so scared an' upset. W'y, my sakes, they were a most loving couple, as I can testify, being a close neighbor. (MRS. BROWN *cries, "Yes, yes," and weeps.*) For her just to think of his lying cold and silent in death, with maybe his throat cut, is too much for her delicate system. Be careful what you say.

O'BRIEN. Yis, ma'am, shure, but Oi got to say somethin' to kape up the dignity o' my perfession. (*Shakes head.*) It's shure a most bafflin' case.

JANE (*wailingly*). Oh, it's just too dreadful for words. He was such a nice man. W'y, only yesterday he an' I were talkin' about love an' marriage, an' he says—

MRS. BROWN (*with a scream*). He didn't. My husband didn't talk to you of love and marriage, you deceitful girl.

JANE (*frightened*). Oh, no, ma'am—that is, he was talkin' about my marryin' that young plumber who's been sort of sweet on me, an' he says that—

MRS. BROWN (*taking on*). Oh, you gave me such a scare, Jane.

MRS. PEPPER (*severely, to* JANE). Be careful what you say to her. What with her husband maybe gone forever, stabbed by some dastardly villain, don't talk about love, especially with Mr. Brown, such a nice-looking man and fond of the ladies.

JANE. I didn't mean a thing, Mis' Pepper, honest I didn't. (*She and* MRS. B. *weep.*)

(*Enter* MR. *and* MRS. GOLDEN *with a rush.*)

MRS. GOLDEN (*excitedly*). Oh, this is too, too awful. Is Harvey really murdered? (*Throws herself down by* MRS. B., *hugs her, and they both weep.*)

MR. GOLDEN. Why isn't something being done? Let's get at the bottom of this. (*Paces about.*) This is my nephew that perhaps has been cruelly murdered and—

MRS. GOLDEN (*with shriek*). Oh, don't mention such a thing. Haven't you any consideration for dear Lulu's feelings?

MRS. PEPPER. That's what I say. These men don't use any delicacy of speech.

O'BRIEN. Well, a spade's a spade an' a murder's a murder.

MR. GOLDEN (*excitedly*). Well, let's do something. Let's find some clews and—

O'BRIEN (*holding up hand importantly*). Not just yet, sir. 'Tis the daytective we must be waitin' for, an' nothin' to be daysturbed till he's looked things over, shure.

(*Enter* DETECTIVE NOSS.)

NOSS. Well, Officer O'Brien, how do things look?

O'BRIEN. Serious, sir, as if it might indade be murder. (*Ladies scream.*)

MRS. GOLDEN. Don't talk of murder. I can see the dear, innocent man stretched stiff in death with perhaps a bullet in his brain. (MRS. B. *wails and weeps.*)

MRS. PEPPER. How will his dear wife survive this? It may kill her, too, as is sometimes the case.

NOSS. What clews have you noticed, Officer O'Brien? (*He looks about.*)

O'BRIEN (*waving long, bloody knife*). This, sir, was in the other room, an' Oi think it shure looks sayspicious. (NOSS *examines it.*)

MRS. GOLDEN (*with scream*). What a terrible knife.

MRS. PEPPER. And whose blood is upon its shining blade?

JANE. Many's the time I've cut meat with that knife, little dreaming it would be used perhaps for murder. (*Weeps;* MRS. B. *takes on.*)

MR. GOLDEN. Let's hear the story, detective. This man was my nephew and I'm getting anxious.

NOSS. You tell what you know, Officer O'Brien. (*Folks sit.*)

O'BRIEN. It was, Oi should say, somewhere 'bout eight o'clock when I was home atein' me breakfast, bein' late baycause o' workin' late las' night, whin the tellyphone rang, an' a lady's voice, turrible excited, asked me to come to her house.

MRS. BROWN. Oh, yes, indeed, I was *very* excited. I was almost frightened into the grave over the affair. (*Wails; women comfort her.*)

O'BRIEN. So Oi hurried here an' after a toime Oi managed to get the story from Mrs. Brown.

MRS. PEPPER. The poor dear was so terribly upset it's a wonder she could talk at all, thinking her husband was maybe murdered.

NOSS. You better tell us the story, Mrs. Brown.

MR. GOLDEN. Try to be brave; we must get at the bottom of this.

MRS. BROWN. No, no, I can't talk. I can't say a word—not a word.

MRS. PEPPER. I'll tell it for you, poor dear. My husband says it'll be a wonder if they keep me still at my funeral, I'm such a hand to talk. You see, it was like this: Mr. Brown was working at the factory and he wasn't coming home until eleven o'clock, so Mrs. Brown decided to go to bed.

MRS. BROWN (*weepingly*). He always told me not to wait up for him as I'm such a hand to get sleepy in the evening.

JANE. Yes, I've heard him say so myself. He was a kind man. (*Weeps.*)

MRS. PEPPER. So Mrs. Brown slept away, never dreaming of any trouble until after midnight, when she woke up and here her husband wasn't home yet. So she lay awake until one o'clock, wondering what could have happened.

JANE. Yes, it was at one o'clock she called me and told me something must be the matter. I told her he was having to work a lot longer than he expected, 'cause sometimes he has to work most all night. So we both went to sleep, peaceful as could be.

MRS. PEPPER. Then at six o'clock Mrs. Brown woke up and (*tragically*) her husband wasn't home yet.

JANE. We talked about what could be the matter, an' then I went to the kitchen to make us some coffee, an' there was Mr. Brown's hat he'd worn—an'—an'—this—bloody knife.

MRS. GOLDEN. Poor, dear Harvey. Don't you know, Nathan, I've said I was afraid something would happen to him, he was so good.

MR. GOLDEN. But if he'd been murdered his body would have been in the kitchen.

NOSS (*who has been looking knife over carefully*). No, not necessarily. It is quite the custom now to dispose of the body. Have you looked in the furnace, Mrs. Brown?

MRS. BROWN. Of course not. I couldn't think of such a thing, even if I'd thought about it. The furnace—ugh! (*All the women weep.*)

NOSS. Or if there is a garret, the body might be in a trunk, back under the eaves of the garret, as was true of one case I worked on.

JANE. But there isn't any garret.

O'BRIEN. Or the body might be in the cistern, as was the case of old lady McNulty, shure.

MRS. GOLDEN. No, no, there isn't any cistern. (MRS. BROWN *takes on as these places are mentioned.*)

MR. GOLDEN. If the body were here you folks would have found it. I believe it was carried away, perhaps to some dark cavern; perhaps to the river. (*Tragically.*) Oh, this suspense is terrible. (*Paces about.*)

MRS. GOLDEN. Don't make yourself sick, Nathan. I couldn't bear to lose you, too.

MRS. BROWN (*wailingly*). No, it is enough that Harvey is gone—the dearest, best man in the world.

MRS. PEPPER. I don't know why you think he was better than my husband. Moreover, I've heard you complain of Mr. Brown because—

NOSS (*holding up hand*). Silence, please. We must work on this case and not lose valuable time. Now, as I understand it, Mr. Brown came home.

MRS. BROWN. Yes, because his work hat was in the kitchen and a paper he brought home was on the table.

NOSS. And on the table you found this knife, smeared with blood?

MRS. BROWN (*tragically*). Oh, that awful knife!

JANE. It looked so horrible with that blood on it lying on the table.

NOSS. Mr. Brown might have gone away, leaving this knife for a blind, to make you think he was killed.

O'BRIEN. Shure, now, he might. Would you be thinkin', daytective, that he's runned off with another woman? That's dreadful stylish nowdays.

MRS. BROWN (*groaning*). I'd rather he'd be found murdered. If he had another woman—I'll—I'll, why, I'll—(*Weeps.*)

MRS. GOLDEN. I don't blame you, Lulu. I would, too. (*The women try to comfort* MRS. BROWN.)

JANE. I've heard it said you never know what the best of men will do, but I did think Mr. Brown was different.

MRS. PEPPER. Yes, but still you could tell he liked to be nice to the women.

NOSS (*who has been meditating*). The first thing to do is to find out whether the blood on this knife is from a human. If it is human blood, we can naturally assume it to be Mr. Brown's, and we'll institute a search for the body.

MR. GOLDEN. Yes, this is logical. Let's get busy.

NOSS. Should this not prove to be human blood, we will assume that Mr. Brown left this gore-stained knife to throw us off the track and that he has perhaps gone off with another woman.

MRS. BROWN (*rising and waving hands*). Oh, just let me get hold of the woman he went with—just let me! She will find what the revenge of a scorned wife can do to her.

MRS. GOLDEN. There, there, dear. If he was that kind you're glad to be rid of him, I'm sure.

(*Enter* MRS. BATES.)

MRS. BATES. Oh, my dear Mrs. Brown, isn't this terrible? I'm SO upset over it that I'm simply speechless, but I wanted to tell you how sorry I am for you. Oh, policeman, can't you find Mr. Brown? Why don't you get a detective and find out something?

NOSS. I am a detective, and I'm working hard on the case. We are evolving important theories and will soon work them out, madam.

MRS. BATES. Well, I wanted to tell you that I saw a man go away from your house in the night, Mrs. Brown, walking rapidly, and it may give you a clew to work on.

O'BRIEN. Shure; why didn't you tell us before?

NOSS. Do you think that man was Mr. Brown?

MRS. BROWN. Did you see a woman waiting for him any place?

MR. GOLDEN. What time did you see him, Mrs. Bates?

MRS. BATES. Let me think—it was—yes, it was before midnight. I remember because I heard the clock strike twelve awhile later. It was so dark I don't know if the man was Mr. Brown or not, though at the time I thought it was. I wondered if there was something wrong over at the factory.

O'BRIEN. Then that bloody knife *is* a ruse, daytective.

MR. GOLDEN. What Mrs. Bates says leads me to believe my nephew is still alive. Now the thing to do is to find him.

NOSS. I will take a look at the kitchen. You may show me, officer, where the knife was found and we'll look for fingerprints. We're not sure yet that Mr. Brown wasn't murdered. His body may still be here in the house. Did you look down the laundry chute?

JANE. Oh, no, we forgot that.

NOSS. You probably forgot other places also. The man who left the house may be the assassin. Come, officer. (*He and* O'BRIEN *go off.*)

MRS. BROWN. I hope he was murdered. (*Weeps.*)

MRS. BATES (*horrified*). Why, you wicked woman. How can you talk so of your nice husband?

MRS. BROWN. I mean I hope he didn't go off with that woman.

MRS. BATES. With what—woman?

MRS. GOLDEN. We're not sure. We're afraid Mr. Brown eloped with some woman.

MRS. BATES. Now that I think of it, I saw him talking to that young widow, Mrs. Bixby, on the street the other day.

MRS. GOLDEN. Come, Nathan, let's telephone and find out if she is in town. (*They hurry off.*)

MRS. PEPPER. I must run home and start something for dinner. I'll come back soon, Mrs. Brown, and see if anything has developed. (*She starts off, gives a scream and dashes back on stage.*)

JANE. What is it? (*She runs off, screams, and comes dashing back.*)

(*Enter* BROWN.)

BROWN. What are you ladies screaming about? Anything wrong?

MRS. BROWN (*with scream*). Oh, Harvey, is this you? (*Falls back in chair, as if to faint.*)

MRS. BATES. A nice man you are to worry your poor wife to death.

BROWN. She's not dead. What's the matter with you folks? Lulu, tell me what is wrong.

MRS. BROWN. Where—where's—that—widow Bixby?

BROWN (*bewildered*). Mrs. Bixby? How should I know? I don't know anything about her. (*Sternly.*) Tell me what's the matter.

(*Enter* MR. *and* MRS. GOLDEN.)

MR. GOLDEN. Why, why, for time sake—is—this—you, Harvey?

MRS. GOLDEN. Aren't you—*murdered?*

BROWN. If I am I'm a pretty lively corpse. Explain things, please.

MRS. BROWN (*throwing herself in his arms*). Don't go off with another woman.

(*Enter* NOSS *and* O'BRIEN.)

O'BRIEN. W'—w'y, see who's here! (*Waving knife at* BROWN.) Explain this knife, sir.

NOSS. Yes, explain its blood-stained condition. (*Some sit, others stand.*)

BROWN. I see you're trying to make a case out of me, but I'm not guilty. I came home from the factory, as I had planned, at eleven o'clock. My wife said there was no meat for the dog, so I brought home some liver. I sliced some, took it out to the kennel and fed him, for I feel sorry for a dog who goes to bed hungry. I had to go with the boss over to the other factory to look after something that had gone wrong. I didn't want to wake my wife, so I left a note telling her where I'd gone, and left, shortly before midnight. (*To wife.*) Why didn't you read that note?

MRS. BROWN. I didn't find it. (JANE *runs off.*)

BROWN. I didn't suppose that knife, stained with blood from the liver, was going to make any trouble.

MR. GOLDEN. You've had us pretty well worked up, old fellow.

(*Enter* JANE, *with the note.*)

JANE. Here's the note. (*Gives it to* MRS. B.) The wind had blown it off the table under the icebox.

NOSS. I guess we'll be going, officer.

O'BRIEN. Oi think that same meself, sir. Glad yer all right, Mr. Brown. (*They go off.*)

MRS. BATES. We better go, too, Mrs. Pepper. Goodbye, folks. (*She and* MRS. P. *go.*)

MRS. GOLDEN. We're not going. Nathan and I are going to stay and celebrate Harvey's safe return.

MR. GOLDEN. Sure we are. (*They all beam on* BROWN.)

CURTAIN.

A MENDED DAY

CHARACTERS

ALICE — JAMES

LORA — CHESTER

THE MENDING MAN

SCENE: *A kitchen.*

Discovered, LORA *sweeping.*

LORA (*crossly*). What a disagreeable day. Everything seems to be going wrong and I'd like to put on my wraps and go for a holiday somewhere. Some days are pleasant to live, but this seems to be one that I'd like to skip. The hard part is that I must stay here and work, putting up with one thing after another that doesn't suit me.

(*Enter* CHESTER *carrying a pair of muddy shoes in one hand, hat in the other, coat over arm.*)

CHESTER (*banging shoes onto floor, throwing hat on table, coat on a chair*). Well, why didn't you call me? You knew I didn't want to oversleep. Now the fellows may have gone off without me.

LORA (*raising voice*). Look at you, coming in here like a Dakota blizzard. I've just been trying to sweep; now see that mud on the floor from your dirty shoes. Sweep it up now, and be spry about it. Take your hat off the table, too. You know it doesn't belong there.

CHESTER. In a fine mood, aren't you? If I'd known you were ugly I think I'd have stayed in bed where it was peaceful.

LORA (*louder*). Go back to bed if you wish, but first clean up the mess from those disreputable shoes, and hang up your coat. Don't I have enough to do without you hindering me like this?

CHESTER (*sitting lazily on table*). Don't yell. I'm not deaf. Can't you pour me a cup of coffee? I'm on the brink of starvation and may fall in if you don't feed me.

LORA. Not a morsel you'll get, not even a dried crust, until you clean up that dirt. I need some coal, too.

CHESTER. Oh, you scolding nagger, just wait until I get that necktie I forgot, and I'll go to the coffee shop and get some breakfast. (*He goes off whistling.*)

LORA. Isn't he enough to provoke a saint in heaven? He won't get a bite to eat here, and I won't pick up his dirty shoes if they stay there a week.

(*Enter* ALICE.)

ALICE. I do hope you have some toast made. I'm hungry as a bear and I'm just primed for nice buttered toast.

LORA. See here, Miss Smarty, why are you wearing my blouse? I did *not* say you could, and I like your sand, taking it without even asking me.

ALICE. Goodness, me, how snappy you are! I didn't think you'd mind. I get tired of wearing the same things and this is really becoming, don't you think? You shouldn't mind a little thing like my helping myself to your pretty clothes.

LORA. Well, I *do* mind. You go take it off.

ALICE. Aw, don't be so mean. Let me wear it.

LORA (*loudly*). Go take it off, and I don't mean perhaps.

ALICE (*angrily*). Very well, and I'll eat down town. You won't see me again today. (*Flounces off.*)

LORA. Oh, how horrid they are to me. The day went wrong from the start; now they have spoiled it entirely. (*Sits.*) I've a notion to run away.

(*Enter* JAMES.)

JAMES. Good morning, charming one. Why the discontented countenance? I came over to ask you to have a ride with me, since I have to go into the country; but you look so—well, to be plain, so downright cross that I believe I'll ask someone else.

LORA (*crossly*). Go and ask someone else—May Irving, for instance, the giggling simp.

JAMES. Say, she isn't so bad. She's good company. She and I had a good time the other night. We—

LORA (*flaming up*). Oh, is that so? I'm not interested in your good times with May Irving. Go on and take her for a ride.

JAMES (*coolly*). I've a good notion to, since you're so snappy. I really prefer young ladies to be sweet-tempered.

LORA (*turning her back to him*). You go on home.

JAMES. Thanks, I believe I shall. (*Exit.*)

LORA. Oh, *why* did I talk so to him? Now he may start going with that silly May Irving and forget all about me. There IS something wrong with the day, I'm sure. (*Knock is heard; she goes over and admits the visitor.*)

(*Enter the* MENDING MAN, *carrying mending outfit.*)

MENDING MAN (*singsong tone*):

Lady, any pots and pans to mend?
I'm the kitchen woman's friend;
If your boiler's wearing through,
And your skillet's leaking, too,
I can make them good as new.
Any pots and pans to mend?

LORA. Oh, I suppose there are some that need fixing.

MENDING MAN (*sitting*):

Bring them to me; look around;
Bring the ones that are not sound.
With some solder and some skill
I will length of life instill.
Bring me pots and pans to mend;
I'm the kitchen woman's friend. (*Opens his kit.*)

LORA. I'll see what I can find. (*Goes off.*)

MENDING MAN (*singing to made-up tune*):

Mend the pail that's lost a bail,
Tap, tap, tappity, tap;
The skillet round leaks, I'll be bound,
Tap, tap, tappity, tap.
The Mending Man will tip and tap,
Pour on solder and rap, rap, rap;
Hi-ho, the Mending Man.

LORA (*entering with a worn kettle*). This needs fixing. It can't be used because of a hole in the bottom.

MENDING MAN (*looking at it*). I can fix it, Miss. A little time, a little work, and it will be quite all right again. I'll have it done in a short time. (*He starts work on it, pretending to put on solder, then tapping and fixing it with small hammer. As he works he sings*):

The Mending Man, the Mending Man,
He will do the best he can;
Leaky pans and kettles bring,
He can mend most anything;
Hunt up the ones that need repair,
A cooker here, a stew-pan there,
With a tappity-tap,
With a patch or two,
He will have them good as new.

LORA (*who sits gloomily watching him*). You seem very capable, Mending Man.

MENDING MAN. I can fix most anything, Miss.

LORA. Can you mend a day?

MENDING MAN (*surprised*). A—day, Miss?

LORA. Yes, a day that seems to have gone wrong, with ugly things happening to make one cross. I wish it could be mended. How would one go about it?

MENDING MAN (*as he works and taps*).

I would mend a day with smiles of cheer,
With lilting laughs for folks to hear,
With pleasant words and a joke or two,
And of kisses perhaps a few.
Smiles, kind words and laughter, I say,
Will mend the very worst kind of a day.

LORA (*sighing*). Yes, they might.

MENDING MAN (*rising*). Here it is, Miss. Mended, neatly, and completely.

LORA (*paying him*). Thank you and good luck to you. (*He goes.*)

(*Enter* JAMES.)

JAMES. Well, I have returned, like the proverbial bad penny.

LORA (*smiling gaily*). Oh, I'm glad you came. I have a recipe for mending a day that was going wrong; I want to try it on you.

JAMES. How are you to go about it? Of one thing I'm sure—the day is mending for me already because of your smiles.

LORA. That is the recipe, smile, laugh, joke, speak pleasantly—why, Jamie, how can a day go wrong if one smiles and laughs away the infesting trials?

JAMES. Who has been teaching you this?

LORA. The Mending Man.

JAMES. Well, the wise fellow. I'm glad he called because you're very, very much nicer than the young woman I met here awhile ago. Won't you come and go riding with me? I don't want to take May Irving.

LORA. Yes, I'll go as soon as I put away Chester's old shoes and clean up the floor. I want to do that so he'll be pleased when he comes in.

JAMES. I'll help you. (*He sweeps up while she puts shoes away.*) The big bum had no right to throw them here to make you all this bother.

LORA. Oh, if I had smiled, and joked and given him a kiss or two he'd have put them away. I think we spoil our own days, Jamie.

JAMES. Well, give me the kiss or two, and let's get started for a jaunt into the country.

LORA (*laughingly*). No, the kisses are for Chester because I was so disagreeable to him. Run get your car. My day is mended and we're going to be happy.

JAMES. I'm off, fair lady. (*He hurries off one side, she the other.*)

CURTAIN

THE WINNING OF WINNIE

CHARACTERS

MR. GOSS, *a working man.*
MARY, *his wife.*
WINNIE, *the daughter.*
EDWARD, *the son.*
ELIJAH HARRIS, WINNIE'S *elderly admirer.*
DAVID BUMPS, *a young admirer.*
ELAINE MORSE, EDWARD'S *friend.*

SCENE: *The* GOSS *living room with a phonograph at the rear, a large easy chair, at left of center, library table, and other chairs.*

Discovered, MRS. GOSS *sitting;* MR. GOSS *coming on as curtain rises.*

MR. GOSS. Well, Mary, it's fine to come home from work and spend a quiet evening with you and the children—if they

happen to be here instead of gadding about. Where's the evening paper?

MRS. GOSS. Right here, dear, where we always put it. (*Gets it from table and gives to him; he sits in big easy chair.*) I'll get my mending. (*He reads paper; she goes off and returns with socks, which she starts to darn, sitting across room from him.*)

MR. GOSS (*behind paper*). My, my, that's dreadful—sure is.

MRS. GOSS. What is? (*After a pause—louder tone.*) What—is?

MR. GOSS (*abstractedly, looking over paper*). What is—what?

MRS. GOSS. What you were talking about. What was it?

MR. GOSS (*reading*). I don't know—something I read I s'pose.

MRS. GOSS. A man with his nose in a newspaper is the dullest thing I know.

MR. GOSS (*lowering paper*). Huh?

MRS. GOSS (*crossly*). Nothing. I didn't say anything.

MR. GOSS (*good-naturedly*). Lots of women talk without sayin' anything. (*He reads, she works and there is a pause of silence.*)

(*Enter* EDWARD *and* WINNIE *breezily.*)

EDWARD. Why all the gloom? You folks playing you're at a funeral?

WINNIE. You sound as animated as a deaf and dumb convention. (*She starts the phonograph playing a song and she and* EDWARD *sing it noisily.*)

MR. GOSS. Here, here, how do you think I can read with all this racket going on?

EDWARD. Concentrate. A little melody like this shouldn't disturb you. (*They sing again.*) Say, I wonder if we can get that new step. (*He starts a two-step and they practice some fancy steps, one on each side of phonograph.*)

MRS. GOSS. Did you hear any news today, Winnie?

EDWARD (*stopping music*). Oh, say, what's in the paper? (*He goes up and takes part of paper from his father.*) Let me have the sport section, dad.

WINNIE (*taking some more of the paper from him*). Oh, I've got to have the story. It left off in a dreadfully interesting place last night.

MR. GOSS (*crossly*). I like this. Here, you may as well take the rest of it. (*He gets up and tosses the rest of the paper to his wife.* WINNIE *takes the chair her father vacates,* EDWARD *leans against the back of it. They and* MRS. G. *read.*)

MRS. GOSS. You hurry with the story, Winnie.

MR. GOSS. I'd like to know who pays for that paper. (*He goes back and starts phonograph, leans against wall and thumps floor with foot, keeping time to music.*)

EDWARD. Have we got to have all this noise when we're trying to read? It sounds like a Fourth of July pow-wow.

WINNIE. Pa, why don't you write a letter to somebody so's to be quiet? (*A knock is heard;* MR. G. *goes over and admits visitor.*)

MR. GOSS. Come in, come in, my dear; glad to see you.

(*Enter* ELAINE.)

WINNIE. Hello, dearest. Come sit here with me.

EDWARD. Hello, angel-heart. Come sit here beside *me*. (*He pulls* WINNIE *out of the big chair, seats* ELAINE *in it and sits beside her on arm of the chair.*) Sure nice of you to come over.

ELAINE. Thanks. I just ran over to see Winnie about the new sweaters we're going to buy.

WINNIE (*sitting on other arm of chair*). I knew you came to see me. Let's get blue ones.

MR. GOSS. You're not going to get new ones. You got some just last week. (*He sits.*)

ELAINE. No, that was new hats we got—or was it shoes?

MRS. GOSS. How's your mother, dearie?

EDWARD. See here, when a young lady sits by me I want her to talk to *me*. How about going to a show?

MR. GOSS. Did your father get the contract for that work, Elaine?

EDWARD. I said how about a show, sweetie?

WINNIE. Oh, darling, did you see the new jewelry in Hummel's window? They've sure got some swell pieces. Cheap, too.

ELAINE. Oh, let's buy us some. I'm just positively crazy about some of these new jewelry doo-dads.

MRS. GOSS. Now, Winnie, you can't afford any. You've got to finish paying on your coat.

EDWARD. Ye-ah, an' on that forty-dollar contraption you try to make folks think is a dress, you extravagant little snip.

WINNIE. Oh, be still! (*Makes face at him.*) If I tried to dress like a royal sheik from Sahara, the way you do, you might talk.

EDWARD. You've got no call to talk—togging out like the queen of Sheba an' sendin' pa to the poorhouse.

ELAINE. What was it you asked me, Mr. Goss?

MR. GOSS. I said did your pa get that contract for that work?

ELAINE. Oh, I dunno. I guess maybe he did 'cause he's talking 'bout a new car. He can't decide on what kind.

MRS. GOSS. Oh, it ain't the pickin' one out that's the worst; it's the feeling after you've bought it that you'd ought to got some other kind of a car. Ain't it so, papa?

MR. GOSS. I guess that's right.

EDWARD. Say, baby, are we going to a show?

ELAINE. Yes, I s'pose so. We'll take Winnie along.

WINNIE. Oh, no, I'm going to—to—have a date.

EDWARD. Yeah, that measly little runt of a Bumps, I s'pose.

WINNIE. Pa, I tell you that you've got to make him stop poking fun at my friends.

EDWARD (*getting up and acting like a meek little nitwit*). I—I—just—just dropped in to—to—er—drop in.

ELAINE. Come on, Eddie (*rises*) or we'll be late for the show. I'll go get ready. (*Starts off.* MR. GOSS *comes up and takes the big chair.*)

EDWARD. I'll be over in ten minutes.

(*Exeunt opposite sides.*)

MRS. GOSS. Winnie, I think Mr. Harris might drop in tonight.

WINNIE. Well, if he drops in he can drop out again. I won't be here. I can't stand that old gorilla.

MR. GOSS. Now see here. Winnie, he's a nice man, a fine man, an' he's got money in the bank, an' two houses. I'll tell you, a girl could be glad to have a husband like him.

WINNIE (*mockingly, rubbing hands together and speaking in slow, solemn manner*). Ah, er, Miss Winnie, may I have the pleasure of your company to church this evening? He gives me the Willies. I got a nice young fellow, pa.

MRS. GOSS. Now, Winnie, we don't approve of that David Bumps. We don't think he's anybody a tall, do we papa? W'y, he isn't man enough to be Mr. Harris's servant, is he papa?

WINNIE. You don't know him; you don't appreciate him. You should be glad to have me take up with such a good young man. (*Knock is heard;* WINNIE *goes over.*)

(*Enter* DAVID BUMPS.)

DAVID. Good evening, Miss Winnie. (*Bashfully.*) I hope I—hope I didn't come too early, or too late. (*Bows awkwardly to* MRS. G.) Good evening, Mrs. Goss. Good evening, Mr. Goss. I—er—hope you're well.

MR. GOSS (*stiffly*). I'm usually well.

WINNIE. Have this seat, David. I'll be ready to go in just a minute. (*He sits on edge of chair; she goes off.*)

MRS. GOSS. How is business going, Mr. Bumps?

DAVID. Why, pretty well, I thank you. I'm getting so I can sweep and dust the store real well.

MR. GOSS. Sweep and dust? What sort of a position do you have, if I may ask? I thought you were in business here.

DAVID. But you see, sir, I'm having to begin at the bottom. Many a great man has had to do that, you know. I hope to be doing better after awhile.

MRS. GOSS. Seems like it would be real hard to support a wife on what you could make sweeping and dusting. It costs a dreadful lot to live nowdays.

(*Enter* WINNIE, *wearing wraps ready for street.*)

WINNIE. I'm ready. Goodbye, daddy and mama. I hope you'll have a nice time while I'm gone.

MRS. GOSS. Yes, we'll have a good time with Mr. Harris —such a fine man he is.

WINNIE (*giggles*). Such a fine old fossil. (*She and* DAVID *go.*)

MRS. GOSS. Oh, papa, ain't it a shame to have Winnie keep comp'ny with a fellow that sweeps out an' dusts, when she could have a fine man like Mr. Harris? Course, he's a little old—(*Sighs.*)

MR. GOSS. What of that? Bein' older he's got a lot laid by an' knows a lot more'n these young whipper-snippers. (*Knock is heard;* MRS. G. *goes over.*)

(*Enter* MR. HARRIS.)

MRS. GOSS. Just you come right in, Mr. Harris. We're sure glad to see you—ain't we papa?

MR. GOSS. Yes, sir. Nobody we'd rather have drop in. (MRS. G. *takes his hat and cane; he sits.*)

MR. HARRIS (*in precise, solemn manner*). I decided to stop in a few minutes to ascertain how you are prospering. I—er—does—Miss Winnie happen to be at home?

MRS. GOSS. Oh, ain't that too bad now that she ain't here, 'cause she had to—to—was it a committee meeting she had to go to, papa?

MR. GOSS. Well, maybe so; I didn't pay any 'tention to where she said she was goin'. These girls have so many things to take up their time, Mr. Harris, I don't see how they manage not to get swamped.

MR. HARRIS. Seems to me they should be restrained—yes, restrained. It would do some of them good to—er—marry and settle down, and live more sedate and useful lives.

MRS. GOSS (*aside*). Oh, how good that Winnie didn't hear that. She don't want to be sedate an' useful.

MR. GOSS. You're right, Mr. Harris. These young women waste too much time foolishly.

MR. HARRIS (*very piously*). Frivolity, brother Goss. There's too much frivolity in the world. Well, since Miss Winnie is not here, perhaps we might play a game of checkers.

MRS. GOSS (*rising*). Oh, papa, let's take Mr. Harris to the show. I know a real good one we can go to.

MR. GOSS. That suits me fine. How 'bout you, Mr. Harris?

MR. HARRIS. I do not object to a good show once in awhile; if you insist, I shall be glad to go with you.

MRS. GOSS. I'll be ready right quick. (*Hurries off.*)

MR. HARRIS. I am about to close another business deal, brother Goss. If it goes through, I shall be a number of thousand dollars better off.

MR. GOSS. That's good. You're a prosperous man—nothing to worry 'bout financially, I guess.

MR. HARRIS. No, nothing. The woman who weds me, brother Goss, will have what you might call a wealthy husband. Yes, I would do well by her, too, not letting her lay waste to my substance, you understand, but providing comfortably for her. She would be well dressed but I do *not* approve of all these flippety-floppety gewgaws with which young women are adorning themselves.

MR. GOSS (*aside, nervously*). Good thing Winnie didn't hear that. She likes floppy gewgaws.

(*Enter* MRS. GOSS, *ready for street.*)

MRS. GOSS. Now you see, it don't take me two-three hours to get ready like it does some these young ladies. Shall we go?

MR. HARRIS (*solemnly*). With pleasure, my dear Mrs. Goss. (*She gives* MR. G. *his hat, also* MR. H. *as curtain falls.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II—*Scene as above*

WINNIE *and* ELAINE, *seated at leisure.*

WINNIE. I'll say my new cushion is nifty. It looks fine on the window seat in my room. I'll let you take the pattern so you can make you one.

ELAINE. All right, darling. I'd like to borrow it. Get it for me now, will you?

WINNIE. Sure I will, dearest. (*Exit.*)

(*Enter* EDWARD.)

EDWARD. Why, heavenly-eyes, are you here all alone? What a shame.

ELAINE. Winnie just went to get me a pattern. (*He sits* near her.)

EDWARD. I wish you'd talk to Winnie about the way she treats Mr. Harris. She's certainly silly to turn him down, all the property and money he's got and for that moon-eyed, stammering dumb-bell of a Bumps. Why she'd be sitting pretty if she'd take Harris.

ELAINE. Oh, is that SO? I don't know that Winnie can get him. He's been smiling at me lately. I can be engaged to him next week if I want to.

EDWARD (*angrily*). What, that wrinkled old archipelago? You'd be crazy to tie up to a back-number like him. (*Plead-*

ingly.) You know how I adore you, and you know I want you to marry me as soon as I get another raise at the shop. Why, Elaine, you want a young fellow like me that you can have a good time with.

ELAINE. Oh, is that so? Well, hasn't it occurred to you that Winnie may want a young husband that she can have a good time with? It's no worse for me to marry Harris than it is for Winnie.

EDWARD. Oh, yes it is.

ELAINE. Why?

EDWARD. Because if you don't marry me I'll never have another happy day as long as I live.

ELAINE (*laughing*). Oh, why don't you say you'll blow your brains out? That sounds so thrilling.

(*Enter* WINNIE, *with pattern.*)

WINNIE. Here it is, dear-heart. (EDWARD *takes it.*)

EDWARD. I'll carry it home for you. Come on, let's go. There are some things—or at least one thing, that we've got to settle.

ELAINE. All right, come on. Winnie, don't let the folks discourage you about Davie Bumpie; he's all right. (*She and* EDWARD *go off.*)

WINNIE (*musingly*). Yes, I believe he is. He doesn't say much about himself, but I believe he's a good fellow—if he doesn't look like a sheik and act as if he owned the Mississippi valley with Chicago thrown in. (*Sits.*)

(*Enter* MR. *and* MRS. GOSS.)

MRS. GOSS. Now, here she is right here and you can tell her these things yourself. You don't need to put it off on me, papa. (*They sit.*)

MR. GOSS. But maybe you could say it better, mama, being a woman.

WINNIE. Never mind; neither one of you need say it. It's about that grinning gorilla of a Harris. You want me to marry him just because he's got a little money.

MRS. GOSS. Oh, he's got a lot. He could take you to Italy for a wedding trip. Me, I only got to go to Niagara Falls when your papa and I got married.

MR. GOSS. Yes, but that was a grand trip then and we saw more water'n we thought there was in the whole country. Now this Bumps, that sweeps out an' dusts, he couldn't take you on any trip that cost thirty dollars, like our trip to Niagry Falls.

WINNIE. David Bumps is coming tonight to talk to you folks. He's going to tell you about our wedding.

MR. GOSS. What! You're not married—to that sweeper an' duster!

WINNIE. No, but we're going to be. Now you be nice to him tonight, pa ,and don't you get rough. (MR. *and* MRS. G. *both express anguish.*)

MRS. GOSS. Oh, to think you'll throw yourself away like this. Ain't it awful, papa, when she could have a grand man like Mr. Harris?

WINNIE. Aw, applesauce! (*Knock is heard;* WINNIE *goes over.*)

(*Enter* DAVID BUMPS.)

DAVID. Good evening, Mr. Goss. I—I—hope you're well. Good evening, Mrs. Goss. I hope—I hope you're well, too. I really do. It's nice—to be well, you know. (*They speak coldly;* WINNIE *gives him a seat.*)

WINNIE (*brightly*). The folks are glad to see you, David.

DAVID (*bowing bashfully to* MR. *and* MRS. G.). Oh, thank you. I—I'm glad, because I—want to—I would like to—if you'll be so kind, I'd like to talk to you—about—(*he and* WINNIE *sit*).

WINNIE (*gaily*). About something real important.

DAVID. Oh, very important. In fact, I want to ask you (*impetuously*) if I may marry your daughter.

MR. GOSS (*loudly*). No, sir, you may *not!*

MRS. GOSS. We have other plans for Winnie.

WINNIE. Aw, applesauce!

MR. GOSS. Young lady, don't give your mother applesass or any other kind of sass. (*To* DAVID.) Want to support her by sweeping and dusting a store, eh?

DAVID (*very earnestly*). Oh, but I'm leaving the store. I'm going home soon and I—if you don't object, I—want—

WINNIE (*running over and patting her father*). He wants to take me with him. Isn't that splendid?

MR. GOSS (*sternly*). Young lady, sit down. (*To* DAVID.) She can't go.

DAVID. You see, sir, my father has a large law business and he found that a man here was trying to cheat a poor woman my folks have known for years, out of some valuable property here. My father sent me to find out about it—you see, I'm taking law, too. This man is so sly that I went into this store to work for awhile, to find out just what he was trying to do. I sort of worked around the store, but on the side I was looking into the business. I found that man was going to beat this woman out of more than twenty thousand dollars. Oh, really, he's—a—regular—scamp.

WINNIE. Why, David, you never told me this.

DAVID. No, I didn't want to say anything until I was sure.

MR. GOSS. Who is this man?

DAVID. A Mr. Harris—Mr. Elijah Harris.

MR. GOSS (*jumping up*). This is—blackmail. He's a fine man.

DAVID. Oh, no! He's the biggest cheat in this town. I know what I'm saying.

WINNIE (*amazed*). What do you—know—about this?

MRS. GOSS. It's never true, is it papa?

MR. GOSS (*sitting*). I—don't know—what to think. (*Jumps up.*) This is all false. That man is a friend of ours. He's—going to marry Winnie.

DAVID (*jumping up and pulling off coat*). You'd marry that sweet young lady off to a black scoundrel? I'll thrash you for saying such a thing. (*Goes over and spars as if to fight.*)

MR. GOSS. I'll teach you a lesson, you young whipper-snipper. (*Doubles up arms as if to fight.* WINNIE *and* MRS. G. *scream.* WINNIE *gets between the two men.*)

DAVID. Just you ask Harris about Mrs. Vosburgh's store. (*A knock is heard.*)

WINNIE. I think that's Harris, now. You folks go in the other room and let me manage him. (MR. *and* MRS. G. *and* DAVID *go off quickly. The knock is repeated;* WINNIE *goes over.*)

(*Enter* HARRIS.)

MR. HARRIS (*beamingly*). Good evening, dear Miss Winnie. What a very great pleasure to find you here. (*Lays down hat and cane.*) And alone, too. What luck. Now we can have a nice talk. (*She motions for him to sit; they take seats.*) In fact, my dear, I've been wanting a chance like this for some time because there is something very special I want to tell you. (*Rubs hands together and beams at her.*) I want to tell you how charming I think you are—very charming, my dear, and I think a great deal of you. In fact (*impressively*) I—want to make you my wife. This may surprise you, for I am a wealthy man and many a woman would be glad to become Mrs. Harris, but I—am asking *you,* my dear. (*Simperingly*): Think of a wedding trip to Spain and Italy. Oh, I will make you so happy. (*Rises to go to her.*)

WINNIE. Sit down, Mr. Harris. There are two reasons why I cannot be your wife—I'm going to marry some one else and I wouldn't marry a man who would cheat a woman out of all she has. Now, you better go.

MR. HARRIS (*piously*). My dear girl, who has poisoned your mind? You surely know I am an upright man who—

(*Enter* DAVID, *followed by* MR. *and* MRS. G.)

DAVID. Fine. If you're such an upright man, just tell us why you're trying to put Maria Vosburgh's money into your pocket and—

MR. HARRIS. You amaze me! How dare you insinuate such a false idea?

DAVID. Oh, no, not false. Between Collins and Donnelly, I have secured evidence enough regarding this store deal to put you—in the pen.

MR. HARRIS. I shall not listen to such talk. I refuse to stay where I am insulted in this manner. (*Hastily.*) I shall leave. (*Picks up hat and cane.*)

MRS. GOSS. I think he better go, don't you, papa?

MR. GOSS. I wouldn't have believed it of you, Elijah Harris.

MR. HARRIS (*angrily*). This is an outrage. (*Hurries off.*)

DAVID. His actions prove his guilt. Now, Mr. Goss, I believe we were talking about—about my winning your daughter. As I was saying—

WINNIE. Of course I'm going to marry you, David. Come on, let's go make some fudge. (*They go off happily.*)

MR. GOSS (*crossly*). That's as much respect as young folks have for their parents nowdays.

MRS. GOSS. It sure is a shame, papa. But I think he'll make Winnie a splendid husband, don't you?

MR. GOSS. His father belongs to that big firm that's known all over the state. Winnie's doing well to get him. She's a smart girl.

MRS. GOSS. Well, just see who she's got for father and mother, papa.

MR. GOSS. Sure!

CURTAIN

COLUMBUS UP-TO-DATE

CHARACTERS

COLUMBUS, *who wants to discover America.*
SIGNORA COLUMBUS, COLUMBUS'S *wife.*
SIGNORA MURPHY, *a baseball fan.*
GEOGRAPHER, *who is not sure that the earth is a sphere.*
DIEGO, COLUMBUS'S *son.*
QUEEN ISABELLA, *who aids* COLUMBUS.
KING FERDINAND, *King of Spain.*
PAGE, *at the court of Spain.*
WISEMAN, *who is sure that the earth is not round.*
MERCHANT, *who has a scheme to make Spain rich.*
INDIANS, *three* INDIANS *that* COLUMBUS *has brought home.*
LORDS AND LADIES, *as many as are desired.*

COSTUMES

As the play is a comedy any costumes may be used. However, it would be most effective if the costumes were a mixture of the fifteenth and twentieth centuries.

ACT I

SCENE: *The home of* CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS. *The room should be a curious mixture of the Fifteenth and Twentieth centuries.* COLUMBUS'S *wife is busily straightening the room at the rise of the curtain.*

SIGNORA COLUMBUS. (*picking up maps and charts that are scattered about the room*). If Columbus isn't the worst man that I ever saw to scatter things about. (*Stands up and looks about the room.*) I get so disgusted with him that I am almost tempted to toss them out of the window or—(*looks out of the window and then back at the maps*) if he didn't have to go and discover America that's exactly what I would do. (*Sighs.*) Why are men so careless? (*Works vigorously for a short time, then the telephone rings.*) Well, there's the telephone. If there isn't anything else to interrupt me it has to ring.

(*Goes to the telephone.*) Hello! Yes, this is 6175 R. I don't understand. (*Pauses.*) Oh, Columbus? He isn't here. He took Diego for a little ride. (*Pause.*) I don't know how long. I'm looking for them any time now. (*Pause.*) You want him to call you then? (*Pause.*) No, I won't forget. Good-by. (*Hangs up the receiver.*) Just when I am the busiest that telephone has to ring or something is sure to happen to interrupt my work. (*Gets busy.*) But here's hoping that no one else will be tempted to call until I get this room straightened for it surely is a sight. (*She is busily working when there is heard a rap at the door. She goes to the door and opens it.*) Won't you come in, Signora?

(*The* SIGNORA MURPHY *enters.*)

SIGNORA MURPHY. And why so busy this fine day, Signora Columbus?

SIGNORA COLUMBUS (*sighing*). If you had a husband who was always running around trying to find new continents and Indians and other things when he wasn't at home studying maps and charts, you'd be busy, too. But won't you be seated, Signora Murphy,—that is if you can find a chair that isn't full of maps and charts? (*Clears off two chairs and they sit down.*)

SIGNORA MURPHY. And is Columbus not at home?

SIGNORA COLUMBUS (*shaking her head*). No, he took the flivver this afternoon and he and Diego have gone for a little ride. I told him to be sure to get home in time to fix the radio for there's an excellent program on tonight. But you know how it is when men start off in a car. They never know when it's time to come home.

SIGNORA MURPHY. Sure, an' ain't that just like a man though. Why, when Murphy goes away I never expect him until I see him a coming. And then, will you believe it, he's just as apt to drive up to the front door and remember that he'd forgotten something down town and turn around and go back, and leave me a sitting in the kitchen awaiting dinner for him.

SIGNORA COLUMBUS. Men are certainly thoughtless.

SIGNORA MURPHY. That they are. (*Pause.*) But I didn't come over here to talk about our husband's shortcomings. I came to ask you if you wouldn't like to go to the ball game with me. It's the last game of the season and I thought that you'd like to see the (*name of some well-known local ball team*) play their last game.

SIGNORA COLUMBUS (*regretfully*). I'm sorry that I can't go. Columbus has invited a friend in for supper, so of course I'll have to stay at home. If it wasn't for that I'm sure that I'd just love to go.

SIGNORA MURPHY (*rising*). That's too bad and I had counted on your going with me, too.

SIGNORA COLUMBUS. Well, if it were any one else I'd go but it's some geographer that Columbus heard about and persuaded to come here and spend the evening. Columbus is so anxious to find America, which he says is on the other side of the earth, that he is asking every one that knows anything about geography to tell him all that he can. And I feel that it's my duty to help him. Just think of the honor of having all the boys and girls in America study about you when you've been dead for years.

SIGNORA MURPHY (*glancing at her wrist watch*). It's almost two o'clock and the game begins at three, so I suppose that I'd better toddle right along if I don't want to miss the first inning. (*Shakes hands with* SIGNORA COLUMBUS *and hurries out.*)

SIGNORA COLUMBUS (*as she closes the door*). Well, thank goodness that she's gone. The idea of her stopping to ask me to go to the game with her! (*Sniffs.*) She didn't want me to go at all. She was just curious to know where Columbus was. But I wouldn't satisfy her curiosity enough to tell her that he'd gone to Genoa to get the mail airplane over to Lisbon so that he could have an audience with King John of Portugal. (*As she works.*) I do hope that King John will help him for he's so set on discovering America that it would be a shame if he were disappointed again. (*Picks up a newspaper that is lying on the table.*) So the flyers have completed their trip around the world? (*Reads.*) Well, if King John

doesn't make up his mind pretty soon to let Columbus have those ships, he won't need them. He can get airplanes instead and go in lots less time than three months. (*Noise outside.*) That must be Columbus now. (*Goes to window.*) There's a man with him; it must be the geographer. (*Looks around.*) I'll just go out and see if I can't hurry lunch along for they haven't had time to eat. (*Goes out at right as* COLUMBUS, *followed by* GEOGRAPHER *and* DIEGO *enter at left.*)

COLUMBUS (*as he comes in*). I explained everything to King John, and on my word, I believe that I had him convinced that it would not be difficult to find America, when one of his geographers who doubted that such a continent as America existed, suggested that the King send one of his flyers out. He was gone about an hour. When he returned he told the King that there was no such continent as America, and, furthermore, that the world wasn't round anyway for wasn't he way up in the air and it didn't look a bit round to him. Such ignorance is enough to discourage anyone when he is using every effort to discover America so that when the World War comes the United States can help Italy and the other allies win. I tell you if they are not more careful, I'll just stay right here at home and then there won't be any America. And then I'll see how they'll like that.

GEOGRAPHER (*soothingly*). There, there, Columbus, don't get discouraged. That's the way with everything that's new. There's always somebody that's ready to knock. (*Sits down by the table.*)

COLUMBUS (*opening a map which he shows the* GEOGRAPHER *while* DIEGO, *who has been wandering about the room, sits down in front of the fireplace*). This is the route that I am planning to take. (*Both look at the map intently as* COLUMBUS *traces the route with his finger*). I am planning to go this way and stop at the Canary Islands on my way out.

GEOGRAPHER (*who is looking at the map*). But does not the Sea of Darkness lie somewhat near the route? 'Tis said that there art monsters there that wilt devour all that come within their ken.

COLUMBUS. Monsters, indeed! And pray, what dost think that I would be doing while they were doing their devouring?

I'd like to know what rifles and machine guns are for if not to destroy monsters as well as enemies.

GEOGRAPHER. Well, friend Columbus, thou knowest what thou art doing. I doubt not that the world is round but (*shakes his head thoughtfully*) I wouldst fear the Sea of Darkness and all that it shelters.

COLUMBUS. But do you think that my plan of sailing west to reach the east is feasible?

GEOGRAPHER. Yes, Columbus, you will have no trouble in reaching America if you sail west but— (*Shakes his head as he pushes back the map.*) It is the monsters that lurk near the Sea of Darkness that are to be feared.

DIEGO (*who has been eagerly listening*). Say, don't you suppose that dad would be wise enough to step on the gas and let his old boat go lickety scoot if one of them monsters got after him?

COLUMBUS (*smiling*). You see that even Diego is convinced that I am right.

SIGNORA COLUMBUS (*entering and curtsying*). Lunch is ready, Columbus.

COLUMBUS. Well, we'll be out in just a moment. (*Turns to* GEOGRAPHER.) I am so determined that I shall be the person to discover America that I am going to take these maps to King Ferdinand of Spain and seek his aid.

DIEGO (*going to his mother*). Oh, mother, we had the nicest ride this afternoon.

SIGNORA COLUMBUS. And where did you go, Diego?

DIEGO. Well, dad drove into Genoa but I stayed with Father Menendez at the convent of La Rabida.

SIGNORA COLUMBUS. And how did you pass your time while you were waiting for your father? It must have been a long day for you.

DIEGO. Oh, it didn't seem so long for I visited the new broadcasting station and watched them while they were broadcasting a program. And, will you believe it, we got word from KYW that they got the program just fine.

SIGNORA COLUMBUS. I'm glad that you had such a pleasant afternoon. (*Turns to* COLUMBUS *who is explaining a map to the* GEOGRAPHER.) Are you nearly ready for lunch, Columbus?

COLUMBUS (*rising*). Yes, and it's hungry that I am, for the roads to Genoa are somewhat rough and I have not broken my fast since morning. (*To* GEOGRAPHER.) And have I convinced you that it will be possible to reach America?

GEOGRAPHER (*shaking his head*). You may reach America if the monsters do not overtake you first. (*Slowly.*) But if you do get there how will you ever come back? Ships cannot sail up hill.

SIGNORA COLUMBUS. I almost forgot to tell you, Columbus, that Mr. Mallinsky from Tallahassee called. He has some fine lots for sale in a new subdivision that's just opened. He says that it's a chance of a lifetime.

COLUMBUS. I'm too hungry to think about lots or anything else except lunch at the present time. (*As the curtain falls all start off toward the right.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *The throneroom of* KING FERDINAND *and* QUEEN ISABELLA.

(FIRST LADY *enters, followed by the* SECOND LADY *and the* THIRD LADY.)

FIRST LADY. And so Mellicent has had her hair bobbed? I knew that she'd do it sooner or later. But how does she look?

SECOND LADY. Oh, she looks *pretty* well, but if I had as thin hair as she has, I'd never have had a boyish bob, even if they are the latest.

THIRD LADY. And do you like her hair bobbed? (*Puts her hands up and smooths her own hair which is long.*) I'd never have my hair cut. They won't wear it bobbed long and then think how hard it'll be when your hair is growing out again.

FIRST LADY (*arranging her hair as she looks in a small mirror in her compact*). Well, we'll all look alike anyway. (*Glances out the door.*) It must be time for the King and Queen.

SECOND LADY. I'd lots rather go down to the drug store and have some ice cream than stand around here in this stupid court while the King grants audiences.

THIRD LADY. I'm sure that I would, too, but (*sighs*) then I suppose that it wouldn't look just right if we'd run off and leave the King and Queen all alone.

FIRST LADY (*who is looking out of the windows*). They're coming now!

(*The ladies step to the back of the stage as the* KING *and* QUEEN, *followed by lords and ladies enter. The* KING *and* QUEEN *seat themselves in two large chairs placed near the center back of the stage. The lords and ladies group themselves in a semicircle back of the* KING *and* QUEEN.)

KING FERDINAND (*to the* FIRST LORD). Summon the page. (*The* FIRST LORD *goes out.*)

QUEEN ISABELLA (*to* FIRST LADY). Didst hear the speech made by the president of the United States last night?

FIRST LADY. No, something was wrong with our radio. There seemed to be so much static in the air that we could get but very little of it.

QUEEN ISABELLA (*in surprise*). Why, the radio in the palace was working splendidly. We heard every word as distinctly as though he were in the room with us.

SECOND LADY. I don't care much for speeches anyway. I'd lots rather hear some good jazz.

(FIRST LORD *enters, bows, and takes his place with the other lords.*)

(PAGE *enters behind the* FIRST LORD *and then goes to the center of the room in front of the* KING *and bows very low.*)

PAGE. The merchant from Madrid who has been granted an audience with Your Majesties waits without.

KING FERDINAND (*looking at his watch*). He's three minutes late now. Bid him enter. (*The* PAGE *bows, and then goes out. He returns immediately, followed by the* MERCHANT.)

KING FERDINAND. And why hast thou asked an audience of us this day?

MERCHANT (*bowing*). Your Majesty, 'twas kind of you, indeed, to grant an audience to one as humble as I. (*Bows.*) I have a scheme whereby we may make Spain one of the richest and most prosperous countries in the world.

FIRST LORD (*to* SECOND LORD). Mayhap he hath discovered a gold mine.

SECOND LORD. More likely an oil well.

MERCHANT (*bowing*). And wilt thou grant me leave to unfold my plans, Your Majesty?

KING (*tersely*): Go on.

MERCHANT. As Your Majesty is full aware Spain is entirely surrounded by air. This air is full of radio messages. I propose to put a tax on each message or program that is discovered in the air above Spain. Such a tax would make Spain rich.

KING (*eagerly*). Yes, and it would help me equip my army to fight the Moors for I am determined that I shall drive them out of Spain forever. (*To* WISEMAN.) What think you of the plan?

WISEMAN (*shaking his head*). I like not the plan. How, may I inquire, does our friend propose to stop the messages that are sent from other nations if they refuse to pay, and how will he prevent those having receiving sets from getting messages intended for them? The plan is too foolish for further consideration, Your Majesty.

KING FERDINAND (*sternly*). And why didst thou appear in this court with such a foolish plan, knave? Retire at once. (*The* MERCHANT *bows as he walks off backwards. The* PAGE *follows him out.*)

FIRST LORD (*to* FOURTH LORD). They'll try to sell His Majesty a gold brick yet.

SECOND LORD. Or some shares in an oil well.

PAGE (*entering and going to the center of the room where he bows very low*). Your Majesty, Christopher Columbus desires an audience at the Court of Spain.

KING FERDINAND (*slowly*). I know not the name.

PAGE (*bowing*). He comes from Genoa, Your Majesty, and tells me he has a plan whereby Spain may become the foremost nation in the world.

SECOND LORD (*to* FOURTH LORD). It's shares in an oil well, all right.

KING FERDINAND (*to* QUEEN). Shall we let this Columbus enter our court?

QUEEN ISABELLA. He may prove amusing and (*yawns*) this has been a very tiresome day.

KING FERDINAND (*to the* PAGE). Bid this Columbus to enter. (*The* PAGE *bows and goes out but returns immediately, followed by* COLUMBUS.)

FIRST LADY (*to* SECOND LADY). He isn't a very classy dresser.

SECOND LADY. I'll say not.

KING FERDINAND (*as* COLUMBUS *kneels before the throne*). And why dost thou want an audience with us, fellow?

COLUMBUS (*opening a roll of maps and charts*). I have here, Your Majesty, some papers that will make Spain the richest nation on the globe.

FIRST LORD (*who has glanced at the papers over* COLUMBUS'S *shoulder but now turns and speaks to the* SECOND LORD). They look like stock certificates, so perhaps you're right about the oil wells.

COLUMBUS (*holding a map so that the* KING *can see*). I propose, Your Majesty, to sail west and discover the rich hoards of the East. There is such a demand for the spices and laces of the East that if Spain but can find a shorter route the fortune of every one in the country is made.

KING FERDINAND (*thoughtfully*). What you say is true, but how do you propose to find that route?

COLUMBUS. The earth is not, as has been thought through the ages, flat, but is round and (*takes an apple from his pocket and demonstrates as he talks to the* KING) as you may see by this apple, if you would go far enough around you would at last reach the other side.

KING FERDINAND (*to* WISEMAN). What think you of the plan?

WISEMAN (*shaking his head*). The earth is not round, Your Majesty, but flat. It was but last evening that we were flying over the city in my new airplane that I looked down and beheld the earth which was quite flat, spread out before me. The plan is foolish, indeed.

COLUMBUS. But, Your Majesty, it would cost but a trifle to furnish the necessary ships and then just think of the glory and honor of discovering—

WISEMAN (*interrupting*). It is too foolish to consider further, Your Majesty.

KING FERDINAND (*shaking his head*). The wisest man in Spain hath decreed that it would be foolish. I can spare no money without some promise of a return for the Moors are pressing closely upon us.

COLUMBUS (*sadly*). I fear that Your Majesty will regret it to the end of your days if you help me not to find America, for find it I shall. (*Bows and goes out.*)

LADY (*to* QUEEN). There art so many foolish men who wouldst make their fortunes.

QUEEN ISABELLA (*thoughtfully*). But something tells me that Columbus is different from the others who would have our help and that we should recall him. (*To* KING.) Think you not that we should help Columbus find America?

KING FERDINAND (*shaking his head*). Heard you not the Wiseman?

QUEEN ISABELLA. And dost thou call him a Wiseman when he refuses to sanction that which would help Spain? (*Rises.*) If thou wilt not help the expedition I will pledge my jewels to raise the money. I wilt sacrifice everything. Even my new limousine wilt go. Columbus must have his ships.

LORD. But we can get no word to Columbus for he hath left the court.

QUEEN ISABELLA. And what are airplanes for? Send out the fastest plane and the best pilot and command Columbus to return to the court at once. (*All look at the* KING *as the* QUEEN *addresses him.*) Shall it not be so?

KING FERDINAND (*rising*). The Queen hath commanded. Send forth the best fliers and command Columbus to return. Tell him that I have decided to give him three ships equipped with the best engines and wireless that it is possible to obtain.

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: *The Court of Spain several months later. The* KING *and* QUEEN *are seated on their thrones. The lords and ladies are standing near them.*

KING FERDINAND. And is there no news from Columbus?

SECOND LORD. Your Majesty, we had a wireless early this morning. The Pinta is expected to reach Spain at any time now. Indeed, it may have landed ere this.

QUEEN ISABELLA. I am eager for the return of Columbus, for, although he has sent us much information over the radio, I should like to see and talk with him.

FOURTH LADY. And do you think, Your Majesty, that he will bring the Indians that he spoke about with him?

QUEEN ISABELLA. I trust so, for I am eager to see the red man and his feathers.

PAGE (*entering and bowing very low*). Christopher Columbus is without, and desires an audience with Your Majesties.

QUEEN ISABELLA (*impatiently*). Admit him at once. (*The* PAGE *goes out but returns immediately, followed by* COLUMBUS *and three Indians.* COLUMBUS *bows deeply when he en-*

ters. The Indians look around curiously and at last seat themselves on the floor.) And did you discover America, Columbus?

COLUMBUS. That I did, Your Majesty.

QUEEN ISABELLA. And is it a fertile country? Did you bring your ships back loaded with laces and spices?

COLUMBUS (*shaking his head*) Nay, Your Majesty. America is not a land of laces and spices, but of automobiles, radios, movies, and airplanes. Not finding the spices I sought, I loaded my ship with the commodities that I did find. I shall doubtless find a good market for them in Spain. If Spain can but secure a monopoly of America's trade, Spain's fortune is made.

KING FERDINAND. And we shall secure a monopoly of that trade for was it not Spanish ships that first reached America?

QUEEN ISABELLA. And met you with no adventures, Columbus?

COLUMBUS (*bowing*). We had just left the Canary Islands, Your Majesty, when we sighted what we thought were the Islands of Darkness. We looked in vain for the monsters but all that we saw were several small airplanes that hovered above our ships for a short time. When they discovered that we were on a friendly mission they returned to the islands without molesting us. (*Turns to the Indians.*) I have brought several of the natives of America with me, Your Majesty.

QUEEN ISABELLA (*as she surveys them intently*). How queer they look with their blankets and feathers.

THIRD LADY (*to* FOURTH LADY). Look at the paint on their faces. Do they not look strange?

FIRST INDIAN (*to* THIRD LADY). Maybe we look heap strange to you, but in America the paleface ladies use red and white paint on their faces.

SECOND INDIAN. In America palefaces and Indians both paint.

THIRD INDIAN (*looking around*). Palefaces in Spain no paint? They heap ugly.

QUEEN ISABELLA (*to* COLUMBUS). And had you no trouble on your return trip, Columbus?

COLUMBUS. We were in mid ocean, Your Majesty, when we discovered that one of the engines in one of the ships was not working properly, so were compelled to put in at a small island to repair our ship. It was while there that I sent the radio message which I trust you received.

QUEEN ISABELLA. We did receive your message, Columbus. Never have I felt so happy as I do now, for Spain has opened up a new market for trade. And, Ferdinand, I think that we should reward Columbus, for he has made a perilous journey in safety.

KING FERDINAND (*to the court*). Think you not that Columbus should be well rewarded for his efforts on behalf of Spain? (*All say "yes".*)

QUEEN ISABELLA. I suggest that Columbus be knighted and be given a thousand pesos a year.

KING FERDINAND. Nay, we shall make it ten thousand.

COLUMBUS (*bowing very low*). If Your Majesties please, there is something else that I should prefer.

KING FERDINAND. Speak, Columbus, you have but to make known your wishes.

COLUMBUS. Your Majesties, I ask but the right to have the agency for Fords. If I'm as good a salesman as I am discoverer, I can easily make more than ten thousand pesos a year. And then, when I was in America, I promised Henry that I'd do my best for him when I got back to Spain. And a promise is a promise.

KING FERDINAND (*rising*). Your wish is granted, Columbus. Spain rewards all who serve her even to half of the kingdom.

COLUMBUS. I shall leave this day week for America then. When I return I shall have a cargo of flivvers. That's what they call Henry's car in America. (*Bows as he goes out.*)

SECOND LORD. Say, he wasn't a bit backward about asking for something, was he? Why, he'll be a millionaire in no time, for every one will want a flivver.

KING FERDINAND (*rebukingly*). But has he not discovered America, and does Spain owe him no reward? (*The* KING *and* QUEEN *go off, followed by the lords and ladies.*)

CURTAIN.

TWO VALENTINES

BY KATE ALICE WHITE

CHARACTERS

JOHN MARSHALL TOM FRANK HARRY
RUTH MARY ELEANOR
MRS. GREEN MISS LYLE

SCENE I

This scene takes place early in the morning on the day before St. Valentine's day in one corner of the eighth grade room. Several boys are gathered together. RUTH *is busily working her arithmetic, apparently paying no attention to what is going on among the boys, but in reality she is hearing all that they are saying.*

JOHN (*showing some valentines*). These were the best that I could get.

MARSHALL (*looking at them*). They're no good.

TOM (*showing his*). Here are some dandies.

FRANK (*looking at them closely*). Where'd you get them?

TOM. You know that little shop down by the tracks? Well, they've got a lot of comics.

HARRY. They're surely dandies. Which one are you going to send her?

TOM. Did you see this one about the cranky old maid? I think that one would just fit her.

FRANK. But maybe she will be angry when she gets a valentine like that.

TOM. Say, who's caring whether she likes it or not? She'll never know that we sent it. (*Showing another valentine.*) And here's another one about a woman whose face is sour enough to sour milk. Ain't that a peach?

MARSHALL. Are you going to send that one to Mrs. Green?

TOM. Yes, and this one to her old maid sister that lives on the other side of the fence from her.

MARSHALL. Say, if they ever find out who sent it you'll get yours.

TOM. Who's afraid? I'm going to get them ready now. (*Takes the envelopes, addresses and seals them.*) There now, they're ready to send. (*Gets up.*) I'll put them on my desk and we'll go out and play. (*Puts the valentines on his desk. The boys go out as* MARY *and* ELEANOR *enter.*)

MARY. Got all your problems, Ruth?

RUTH. I haven't been working. I've just been listening to the boys. What do you suppose they are going to do?

ELEANOR. They're apt to do most anything, especially when it's St. Valentine's day.

RUTH (*indignantly*). Just think, they got one of those horrid comics down at Watten's and they're going to send one to Mrs. Green and one to Miss Lyle. And they're going to sign Miss Lyle's name to Mrs. Green's valentines and Mrs. Green's name to Miss Lyle's valentine. They don't speak now even if they are sisters, and they'll be hopping mad when they get comics and think that they have been sent by the other one. (*Suddenly*) Oh, girls, I know what I'll do. I'm going to change the valentines. I've got some pretty cards that I bought on my way to school. (*Goes over to the desk and takes the valentines.*) They're not sealed tight. You watch for the boys and I'll fix them up. Here's one about doves and roses that I'll send to Miss Lyle, and here's one about hearts and love that I'll send to Mrs. Green. (*When she has sealed the envelopes, she returns them to Tom's desk.*) We'll just let those boys think that they've sent those

horrid comics, because If they knew that we took them out they'd send some more.

ELEANOR. Why are boys so mean?

RUTH. They just don't think, that's all. They want to have some fun and they don't think about hurting the other person's feelings at all.

(TOM *and* HARRY *enter.* HARRY *stands at the door;* TOM *goes to his desk and gets the valentines.*)

TOM (*to the girls*). Just wish that you could see the pretty valentines I've got here.

MARY (*giggling*). I just bet you're sending pretty ones.

ELEANOR. Maybe they're prettier than he thinks they are.

TOM (*grinning*). They're beauties all right. I just wish I could see them when they get them. It would be as good as a circus.

RUTH. Who'd be the clown—you?

TOM (*starting out, followed by* HARRY). What you don't know won't hurt you. (*Goes out.*)

MARY. I just wish they could see them when they open them. Wouldn't they be some surprised-looking boys?

RUTH. Oh, girls, I must get to work. I came early to get my arithmetic and haven't done a thing.

MARY. I couldn't settle down to work this morning. I'm going out to play.

RUTH. I've just got to get to work.

CURTAIN.

SCENE II

The mail had just been delivered at the GREEN *home on Valentine's morning. The* GREEN *living-room, which is very simply furnished, is unoccupied when the curtain rises. As soon as the curtain is raised,* MRS. GREEN *enters carrying the morning's mail. She puts her mail down on the table and begins to look through it.*)

MRS. GREEN (*opening a letter*). This is from Cousin Carrie. (*She takes out a valentine card.*) Why, today is Valentine's day. I had forgotten all about it. (*Sighs.*) What good times we used to have when we were children. (*Picks up another letter.*) Wonder what this is? (*Opens it and looks at it in surprise.*) A valentine from Rachel. (*Gets up.*) I'm going right over and tell her that I got it. (*She opens the door as* MISS LYLE *steps in.*) Rachel! You!

MISS LYLE. I got your valentine and I came right over to thank you for it.

MRS. GREEN. My valentine! I don't understand! I got yours all right.

MISS LYLE. My valentine! I didn't send you one.

MRS. GREEN. And I didn't send you one either. I don't understand.

MISS LYLE. I don't either, but let's pretend that you sent mine and I sent yours. I'm tired of living all alone on the other side of that fence.

MRS. GREEN. And so am I. We'll have the fence torn down right away.

MISS LYLE. And we'll both move into the same house. I don't care whether the house is painted white or yellow.

MRS. GREEN. Let's paint it yellow and trim it with white. (*The door-bell rings.*) Some one is at the door. (*Goes to the door.*) Won't you come right in?

(*Enter* RUTH *and* MARY.)

RUTH. We brought you a valentine, Mrs. Green.

MRS. GREEN. I have the valentine that I want, for my sister and I are friends, and that's the best valentine that I could have.

RUTH. Valentine's day is nice, isn't it?

MISS LYLE. It's the best day of the whole year, for while it was made for sweethearts in particular, it shows us all that love and forbearance are the only things that matter.

CURTAIN.

THE MISSION OF MIDAS

By Mrs. Eva R. Baird

CHARACTERS

RED RIDING HOOD. *A vivacious girl in costume.*

CINDERELLA. *A smaller girl in ragged clothes and hair combed carelessly.*

GOLDILOCKS. *A pretty little girl with golden curls.*

MIDAS. *A tall boy dressed in flowing garments.*

TOM THUMB. *The smallest boy available who can take the part. His smallness is emphasized by his being dressed like a man. He wears a man's hat, and carries a cane.*

BILLY GOAT GRUFF. *A boy whose head-gear follows the lines of a goat with horns. The goat costume may be extended to his entire body or not, but he must give the impression of excessive fat.*

THE UGLY DUCKLING. *A short boy or girl with "Duck" head-dress and webbed feet. As in the case of the goat, complete costuming of body is optional.*

SETTING: *An ordinary living room with an open fireplace. When the play opens,* CINDERELLA *is sitting on the floor in front of the fireplace, in which is no fire, but a heap of dead ashes.*

(*Enter* RED RIDING HOOD, *addressing* CINDERELLA *by the fireplace.*)

RED RIDING HOOD. It's getting very monotonous, to say the least, this thing of being caught in a cabin, with a wolf you think is your grandmother. Of course I'm always rescued, but there's no thrill in it any more. I'd be almost willing to let the wolf get me for a change. The whole thing is so absurd, anyway. Grandma may act like a wolf sometimes when she wants to pounce onto somebody in society, but she certainly doesn't look like one. How I ever made that mistake in the first place is more than I can see. And just because I am a Story Person I have to go on making it forever. "What

big eyes you have, Grandmama. The better to see you with, my dear. What big ears you have, Grandmama. The better to hear you with, my dear. What big teeth you have, Grandmama. The better to eat you with, my dear." Such piffle. It makes me sick. Here I've quite grown up, and nobody knows it.

CINDERELLA. You're not the only one, Red Riding Hood. How do you think I enjoy sitting for centuries by this dead fire, after my Pumpkin Coach has disappeared, just because I stayed at the dance until midnight? Why, the Modern Flapper like as not doesn't go home until morning. And does her reputation suffer? Not in the least. She hasn't any to begin with. And sitting by the fire isn't the worst, but that glass slipper. (*She giggles as she mentions it.*) I doubt if it really fit me in the first place; it certainly doesn't now, and of what earthly good would it be to me if it did? I want alligator pumps with French heels and silk stockings to match, and I want them in pairs. Wasn't the Prince a silly fellow, chasing me out of the ballroom like that and running wildly over the country with that glass slipper? And he's doing it yet. Of course *I* know that the thing to do is to find your affinity, but do you suppose he knows what a soul mate is? Not at all, unless its a shoe sole; he judges a girl by the size of her feet. I wish mine would grow, so that I couldn't get on the glass slipper. I shall kick it off sometime and break it all to pieces.

TOM THUMB (*stepping out from behind a large chair, where he has been hiding*). Ho-ho, ho-ho. You didn't know I was here, did you? You girls make me tired. How would you like to be swallowed by a cow for a few hundred years? And riding around inside a fish isn't so much fun. Even saddling a mouse isn't so very thrilling when all the world is traveling in automobiles and airplanes.

CINDERELLA. Well, now, you have had a hard time, Tom Thumb. And you're quite right in thinking that we shouldn't harp on our own troubles all the time. I ought to know if anybody does that being good and patient is the way to success. I wonder what I could do for you. (*Looks at him speculatively.*) You are nearer my size than the Prince, and

I think I'd like you better. Still you are pretty small. Red Riding Hood, can't you do something for this child?

RED RIDING HOOD. He might go with me to Grandma's, and tickle the ear of the bear while I make my get-away. But then the woodsmen would have to rescue him instead of me, and they might not like the change. Beauty in distress is much more appealing, you know, than an undersized man. I'm just real sorry for you, Tom Thumb, but I don't know an earthly thing to do for you.

TOM THUMB (*from the back of the big chair, to the top of which he has climbed, where he now sits swinging his feet.*) O well, never mind me. The Queen of the Fairies cares for me very well, I will say that. I don't usually spill my troubles over on the world. But I thought you girls might cheer up a little if you'd stop and count your blessings. Why, here comes our friend, Billy Goat Gruff. (*Enter* BILLY GOAT GRUFF.) Hello, Bill, which one are you, anyway?

BILLY GOAT GRUFF (*crossly*). I'm Big Bill, of course; who else should I be? I really can't remember which one I was in the first place. But we're all big now, after eating grass on the hillside to make ourselves fat for a hundred years. You don't know any good reducing remedy, do you? Diet is undoubtedly the best thing, but we aren't allowed that. Many's the time I've wished that we had never killed the troll. He was merely crushed to bits, body and bones, but we have to go on eating grass, and eating grass, and eating grass, and getting fatter and fatter and fatter.

MIDAS (*who has entered from the center rear, and speaks in melancholy voice and manner.*) My foolish children, how little do you know of trouble. What matters it that you are fat or thin, or that your grandmother looks like a wolf? Your shoe size or means of transportation are unimportant details. Anyway, you're only Story Folks, who have never been Adopted. I was only a Story Person, too, a foolish King who made a foolish wish. But I've been Adopted, and that makes me Real. You're all bothering your heads because you haven't been Modernized. Well, let me tell you, there are worse things than being old-fashioned Story Folks who point

a moral and adorn a tale. But when they make you Real, you live on Heart-ache Hill.

You remember me, of course—whatever I touched turned to gold, as I had wished, until my own dear little girl became the victim of my folly. And then how bitterly I repented, and she was restored to me. But in this Modern Life I live there is no repentance. Men wish my wish, and it comes true. Gold, gold, gold, the great American god. What matter that the children run the streets, and that Youth has turned to crime, so long as Business prospers? I am living in the lives of a Million Men who have the Golden Touch, but not the Human Heart. My punishment is more than I can bear.

GOLDILOCKS (*who comes running with outstretched arms.*) O, let me comfort you. I am not your own little girl, the one who turned to gold, but little Goldilocks who goes to see the Bears. O such a time I have; it is great fun. The Little Bear's chair breaks, of course, but not until I have sat in it. And I always eat his soup all up; it *is* just right. And I have the nicest nap in the Little Bear's Bed before the Bears come home. And then I always get away, you know, and go running home to mother. I should like to stay sometime. They wouldn't eat me; that's just their joke. Why, Little Bear and I would snuggle down together in that cozy bed and have the nicest time. He's only a Teddy-Bear, now, you know.

THE UGLY DUCKLING (*entering from the side with considerable commotion.*) Quack-quack, quack-quack. What's all this fuss about, you Story Folks? Why, we're the lucky people. Just look at me. How old Mother Duck worries about me, and all the other ducklings tease. They think I'm queer and ugly. And what am I? Of course, you know. I am the Beautiful Swan. Isn't that worth living for? To have told the children of the world for centuries that ugliness is not forever, but that beauty is eternal. I think you other folks are rather foolish, and Goldilocks and I are right. We live forever in children's hearts. It is enough to make them happy, and some of us do more than that. Childhood has found no greater thrill than your escape from the Wolf, Red Riding Hood. It may be old to you, but it is new to every generation of children. And the world would be a dreary

place, Cinderella, if there were no Prince to claim you, nor Fairy Godmother to plan for you—a dreary place, indeed.

TOM THUMB. What about me?

UGLY DUCKLING. O you Tom Thumb! Quack-quack. I need not tell you what to do. Go on playing with your butterflies, and sleeping under rose leaves. The children will always find *you* and be happy.

BILLY GOAT GRUFF. But what of me? Must I go on, growing fatter and fatter and fatter, just to entertain the children?

UGLY DUCKLING. Now that's all nonsense, as you very well know. You get your exercise killing the troll, and if you break him to bits body and bones as often as you should, you'll lose your fat. If you don't, try running up that hill of yours six times before breakfast, and see what that will do for you. Quack-quack.

MIDAS. For all of them there is a place, a way to serve the world. I, only, stand alone, the failure of the Story Folks. And yet—and yet—is there a way for me? Perhaps if I should stand with hands outstretched to this fair child (*indicating Goldilocks*), so like my own, but not quite touching her, and all the world should see the threat I carry, my wish that all I touch shall turn to gold, oh, would they pause, the Million Men who have the Golden Touch but not the Human Heart? This shall be my Mission, to point a better way, to tell the world that treasure is not in gold, but in the hearts of happy children. (*Midas turns and addresses the audience.*) Go back to Conderella and Red Riding Hood, to Tom Thumb and all the rest—back to the wonderland of childhood. Live with your children in Storyland.

UGLY DUCKLING (*nodding his head very wisely.*) Quack-quack, quack-quack, quack-quack.

CINDERELLA. Why, then, I shall be needed as I am.

RED RIDING HOOD. And I.

BILLY GOAT GRUFF. Count me in. I'll reduce some way.

TOM THUMB. I'll be there on a butterfly.

GOLDILOCKS. Why, that's all of us.

THE UGLY DUCKLING. Quack-quack, quack-quack, quack-quack.

CURTAIN.

THE PASSING OF THE YEAR

BY E. J. LEONARD

CHARACTERS

FATHER TIME (*male, representing the old year*).

JANUARY, old year (*wrapped in furs, snow on garments*).

FEBRUARY, old year (*George Washington*).

MARCH, old year (*Girl or young lady, dressed in light-weight clothing, plenty of streamers flying. Electric fan may be used to create breeze.*)

APRIL, old year (*male, slicker, rubber boots, hat, umbrella*).

MAY, old year (*female, spring attire, spring flowers, May baskets, etc.*).

JUNE, old year (*June bride, characteristic dress*).

JULY, old year (*boy, with fire crackers and flags*).

AUGUST, old year (*female, summer attire, fan, large hat*).

SEPTEMBER, old year (*boy or girl, school books, pencils, representing school days*).

OCTOBER, old year (*witch, carrying broom and black cat*).

NOVEMBER, old year (*young lady, autumn leaves, covering yellow dress; leaves in hair; carrying pumpkin and shock of corn*).

DECEMBER, old year (*dressed like* SANTA CLAUS, *carrying empty sack*).

NEW YEAR (*little girl, bright garments, crown with new date; carrying large book with inscription,* "NEW YEAR").

SCENE: *Cosy living room, large clock on mantel set to strike twelve as* OLD YEAR *goes out and* NEW YEAR *enters. Lights low, partly burned candle lit.*

CURTAIN: FATHER TIME *discovered in rocker by table, reading large book, inscription on cover,* "THE PASSING OF THE OLD YEAR" (*use the proper date*).

FATHER TIME (*placing book on table and moving uneasily*). "The Passing of 19—". How dare any one insinuate such a thing? Surely there is some terrible mistake. Nineteen——— is MY name. I have many, many duties yet to perform. Fate would not snatch from me moments so precious—yet—in case—well—at any rate I will make haste and attend to some very important matters—matters which I have neglected. (*He tries to get up, trembles, fails; tries again but sinks back into chair. Anxiously.*) Is it possible that the summer is gone and my work is not finished? Is it too late? (*Seizes book, turns a few pages, reads eagerly, closes, places upon table.*) Yes—yes—it seems I must yield to the inevitable, but it is so hard. I began the year with promise, the WORLD was at my feet, I held twelve happy children in my arms. One by one they have slipped away except December, my youngest, and I read that he too must go. Let-me-think. Let—me—think. (*Rests head in hand a moment, suddenly arouses, grips arm of chair in an effort to arise.*) But I have no moment to idle! Time flies! (*He fails to get up and falls back utterly discouraged.*) Ah! My age IS upon me—I grow weary. (*Head in hand, sinks lower and lower. He sleeps, dreams of children.*)

(*Enter* JANUARY, *old year, walks slowly to front of stage, pauses a moment, passes off opposite side of stage. Each month does likewise except* DECEMBER.)

(*Enter* DECEMBER, *approaches* FATHER TIME, *places hand on shoulder.*)

DECEMBER. Come, Father! we too must be going; 19—(*proper date*)is hastening upon our heels.

(FATHER TIME *stirs, rubs eyes wearily, again sleeps.*)

DECEMBER. Bestir thyself! Thy day is done—thou must away!

FATHER TIME (*waking, makes a few fruitless efforts to arise;* DECEMBER *assisting him, he stands, tremblingly*). Ah, indeed, it has come to this; how cruel! There is much I wished to accomplish—but alas! The day is spent—NIGHT cometh—even the NIGHT OF DEATH! I awaited time's leisure. It bids me go, I must obey. (*Turns toward exit, then pauses a moment; turns back hand to ear as if listening; he hears* NEW YEAR *chimes.*)

DECEMBER (*kindly taking him by the arm*). Make haste, Father, the bells are ringing; don't you hear the bells? They're ringing out the old!

FATHER TIME (*pathetically*). Yes—yes—the BELLS! (*He again faces exit, takes up large book, puts under arm, leans on shoulder of* DECEMBER. *They move toward exit. As they pass off stage* FATHER TIME *turns to say "Farewell".*)

(*Behind scene someone reads a New Year poem, preferably "The New Year", by Elizabeth C. Hardy.*)

THE NEW YEAR

She comes across the wide, white world,
  The world of ice and snow,
Just as the Old Year, worn and wan
  And weary, turns to go.
And young and fair, with smiling face,
  And footsteps light and free,
The New Year marcheth blithely in,
  And greets us cheerily.

And as the Old Year slips away,
  He kindly with him takes
The pages we have blurred and marred
  With failures and mistakes.
The blighted hopes and needless fears
  Are gone beyond recall,
And ours once more the fair, clean page
  The New Year brings to all.

As the seventh line of first verse is read enter NEW YEAR carrying large book, as before mentioned. She pauses in center front of platform or stage, bows, and stands quietly until curtain falls. This will be when reader finishes the reading.

Soft, solemn music is effective during monologue and while JANUARY passes. For FEBRUARY, a military air. MARCH, a lively, breezy tune. APRIL, imitation of rain and, unless otherwise provided for, imitation of thunder by pianist. (*A large piece of tin can be used behind the scenes for this also.*) MAY, appropriate tune; and so on through the months.

In this sketch much depends upon the costumes, proper music, etc., for the scenes.